

ATTORNEY HEARD BY GRAND JURY

Others Also Appear in
Forfeitures Case

T-P 8-8-69
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An attorney for Maryland National Insurance Co., an assistant district attorney in charge of collecting appearance bond forfeitures, and a juvenile court judge testified before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury Thursday.

The assistant district attorney was Shirley G. Wimberly Jr., who has been trying since January to collect bond forfeitures from Maryland National, a bail bonding company.

Forfeitures against the company have grown to \$720,775 in Criminal District court.

The company's attorney, Ralph Kaskell Jr., appeared before the jury for more than two hours. Juvenile Court Judge Leo G. Blessing also testified.

Two other Juvenile Court judges announced Aug. 1 that they will no longer accept bonds from Maryland National because of the large amount the company already owes in forfeitures.

Criminal District Court judges followed suit Tuesday.

It was not known what area of the forfeitures controversy the jury was investigating. Grand jury sessions are secret.

The Maryland National situation came to light when Charles R. Ward resigned his position as first assistant district attorney in June.

He accused Kaskell of attempting to "blackmail" the DA's office into accepting a \$100,000 settlement from the company.

He said Kaskell met with Wimberly and threatened to reveal allegations by officials of the company that Ward accepted bribes to hold up forfeiture collections.

Ward claimed that the alleged action constituted extortion and demanded an investigation.

July 4 two lawyers, Milton P. Masinter and Thomas Toranto Jr., were indicted on charges of corrupt influencing.

They were accused of accepting money with intention of influencing Ward in regard to bond forfeitures.

Ward said the indictments cleared him of any wrongdoing. He was still hopeful that the jury would take up his accusation against Kaskell.