

DENIAL ISSUED IN NORRIS CASE

Alcock Says Effort Made
8/30/68 for Conviction

James L. Alcock, first assistant district attorney of Orleans Parish, has denied that the office was at fault in the case of a repeated bail-bond jumper now in a North Carolina jail.

Alcock said the district attorney's office did "everything it could under the law" to bring the man to trial and convict him.

The man in question is Gerald Dawson Norris, a native of Seminary, Miss., now serving a sentence for burglary in North Carolina. His location was revealed Thursday to Harry Connick, a New Orleans attorney running for the da's post in the November election.

Connick said he found Norris after the da's office was unable to locate him.

Norris was arrested by New Orleans police three times between the period June 7, 1967, and Dec. 8, 1968. Twice he was held on narcotics charges, and once on a burglary charge. He posted a total of \$20,000 in bail bonds during that period, but was never brought to trial on any charge. The bail bonds were forfeited, but were never collected.

In his denial of any wrongdoing by the da's office, Alcock stated:

"The district attorney's office did everything it could under the law to bring Norris to trial and convict him.

"Trials were set but had to be postponed because the arresting officer in the case was injured and could not attend. Trials also were continued on

the request of defense counsel.

"The right to be free on bail is clearly stated in the U.S. Constitution and under prevailing law neither this office nor Criminal District Court judges have the right to deny Norris bail.

"It's interesting that President Nixon and his staff are presently considering laws that would deny bail to persons considered likely to commit further crimes if they are released from detention.

"At present, it would be unconstitutional to have denied Norris bond."

Norris disappeared from New Orleans some time after failing to appear for trial on a narcotics charge Oct. 17, 1968. Sixteen months had passed since he was first arrested.

Alcock said two co-defendants with Norris were convicted, and a girl friend of Norris' was accused and convicted of attempting to bribe police officers. All three are now serving sentences at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, stated Alcock.

"It was unfortunate," Alcock stated, "that the key witness against Norris was ill and could not testify and that the trials were continued. We believe that Norris fled because he knew that law enforcement officials here were going to take action against him."

Alcock maintained that failure of the da's office to collect the \$20,000 bail bonds forfeited in Norris' case had nothing to do with Norris' flight.

The Norris case moved into the spotlight because Maryland National Insurance Co. posted bond for him on two occasions. Maryland National allegedly owes the city \$700,000 in forfeited bail bonds.