

Ward Says He Expects Charges to Be Rejected

Confident of Jury Action on Bribery Allegation

Former first assistant district attorney Charles R. Ward said Wednesday he is confident that the Orleans Parish grand jury will reject bribery accusations made against him in connection with an attempt to collect \$620,000 in bond forfeitures from a bail bonding company.

An investigation which will presumably include the bribery accusations against Ward and his counter charges of an extortion attempt will be undertaken by the grand jury beginning Thursday.

Ward announced that the bribery charges were made against him by former officials of a bail bonding company when he resigned as first assistant DA to run against incumbent DA Jim Garrison last week.

Ward alleged that attorney Ralph Kaskell threatened to re-

veal the charges in June if the DA's office did not accept a settlement from the Maryland National Insurance Co. in bond forfeiture proceedings.

COLLECTION EFFORTS

The DA's office began trying in January to collect appearance bond forfeitures which have since grown to \$620,000.

Ward said that Kaskell met with assistant DA Shirley G. Wimberly Jr. and threatened to reveal the bribery charges against Ward if a settlement of \$100,000 were not accepted from Maryland National.

Ward demanded a grand jury investigation in a letter to jury foreman Fernand S. Lapeyre, saying that Kaskell's alleged actions amounted to "black-mail" under the state statute prohibiting extortion.

CHARGES DENIED

Kaskell has denied Ward's charges, and said that he would be willing to appear before the jury.

Ward also offered to appear, but it was not clear whether either will be invited. Lapeyre has refused to comment on the matter in recent days.

Kaskell declined to comment Wednesday on whether he has been invited to appear before the jury.

In view of the pending litigation on the forfeitures, he said, "The only thing I can do as a member of the bar is make no comment."

Ward said he had not been invited as of Wednesday, but added that he will be in the Criminal Courts Building when the jury meets Thursday.

WANTS TO TESTIFY

"I won't know until then," he added. He said he wants the jury to allow him and Wimberly to testify.

Ward said he is hopeful that the jury will dispose of the bribery allegations against him Thursday. He expects the jury to return a "no true bill," meaning a rejection of the charges.

It is his wish that the jury will then take up his accusations against Kaskell at a later session if they cannot be handled Thursday.

Asked if he were confident of fair play from the DA's office, Ward said only, "I'm confident of fair play from the grand jury."

Ward said last week that Alcock had assured him of fairness from the DA's office, which acts as adviser to the jury.

In resigning, Ward claimed that Garrison knew the bribery charges were false, but used

them as a pretext for withdrawing his recommendation to Gov. John J. McKeithen that Ward be named to one of two new Criminal District Court judgeships.

JUDGESHIPS FILLED

McKeithen has since filled the judgeships with Alvin V. Oser, another Garrison assistant, and Israel M. Augustine Jr., a Negro attorney who has been prominent in civil rights activities.

Ward claimed that Garrison substituted Augustine for him as one of his recommendations to McKeithen.

Ward said the charges against him were made in depositions taken by the law firm of Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles in March.

The depositions said that money was paid to Ward to influence him to hold back on collection of the forfeitures.

Kaskell is a member of Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles, which represents Maryland National in the forfeiture litigation.

Ward wrote to Lapeyre that the grand jury is the proper body to investigate the matter in view of what he said was a close relationship between Garrison and Eberhard P. Deutsch, principal partner of the law firm.

Ward had identified one of his accusers as William Hardy Davis, a former employe of Maryland National.

Asked Wednesday if he expected the jury to invite Davis, Ward said, "If they (the jury) knew where he was they'd call him." Davis is apparently no longer in New Orleans, Ward added.