

TWO GRAND JURIES PUSH CRIME PROBE

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Burbank, Cahn, Novel
Give Testimony

The grand juries of Orleans and East Baton Rouge Parishes continued their twin probes of organized crime in Louisiana Thursday by calling a string of prominent personalities to testify.

Included in the notable parade were state police Supt. Thomas Burbank, Nassau County (New York) District Attorney William Cahn and former New Orleans bar operator Gordon Novel, who gained fame as the elusive witness in District Attorney Jim Garrison's presidential assassination probe.

Novel testified before the East Baton Rouge jurors, while Burbank and Cahn huddled with the Orleans jurors during a lengthy testifying session in the afternoon.

Prior to entering the grand jury room, Burbank maintained that, to his knowledge, there is no syndicated gambling



COL. THOMAS BURBANK
Appears before Grand Jury.



GORDON NOVEL

operation dominating the state. He admitted there may be some "small time betting" going on, but nothing organized on a national scale.

SHERIFFS NOTIFIED

Burbank disclosed that his office has notified every sheriff in the state that the state government expects them to "clean up" any illegal gambling, prostitution and other vices which may be in existence.

Burbank said he was doubtful whether Louisiana could rid itself entirely of such crime, but indicated that it was possible to "tone down" the criminal element. He said there are many other states that need "cleaning up" more than Louisiana.

Cahn, who uncovered a multi-million dollar national gambling ring operating in Nassau County and other areas, including New Orleans, went before the grand jury in mid-afternoon. During a press conference Wednesday, Cahn contended the gambling ring was still in operation.

In Baton Rouge, Novel flew

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into the capital city from Columbus, Ohio, under immunity from arrest. In his possession was a tape recording which he said would make his testimony sensational.

WOULD TAKE TEST

Surrounded by lawyers, Novel refused to talk with newsmen except to say that he would take a lie detector test to back his statements to the grand jury.

In a related happening Thursday in Austin, Tex., a hearing was set for Nov. 21 to decide whether Texas should extradite New Orleans contractor D'Alton Smith to face charges of offering a \$25,000 bribe to Aubrey Young, a former aide to Gov. John J. McKeithen.

Young was mentioned in one of a series of articles in Life Magazine which asserted that organized crime was rampant in the state. The articles triggered the grand jury investigations.

In the Orleans probe, Asst. Dist. Atty. Charles Ray Ward denied Thursday that the gambling ring uncovered by the Nassau district attorney was still operating in New Orleans. Ward said pressure from the local district attorney's office had caused the operation to move to a neighboring parish.

REASON FOR SUBPENA

Ward emphasized that Burbank was subpoenaed for questioning to determine if any significant information has been gathered concerning New Orleans in the state police investigation into organized crime.

He said the state police has been conducting an extensive investigation in the city during the past 10 days.

In New Orleans, Baton Rouge and throughout the state, strong doubt has been voiced by authorities over whether Novel actually has the "sensational" information he claims. Novel is said to have taped conversations in the governor's office after having been hired by Young to "de-bug" the governor's suite.

Baton Rouge DA Sargent Pitcher did not appear to be impressed with Novel's information after having lengthy talks with him. He gave no hint as to what Novel would tell the grand jury.

Young has stated that he

brought in Novel to determine whether McKeithen's phones had been tampered with or if there had been any other type of electronic eavesdropping.

LABOR BOARD PROBE

In another development, the Labor Management Board of Inquiries came into the picture to question Novel at the suggestion of Baton Rouge Teamsters boss Edward G. Partin. The board is investigating labor racketeering in the area.

The board's chief counsel, Camile Gravel, and its chief investigator, A. Harry Roberts, talked with Pitcher to see if an agreement could be worked out for a meeting with Novel. Also present at the conference were Novel's attorneys.

Failure of the board to interview Novel, said Partin, would be "continuing proof that the main endeavor has been to make me and Local 5 scapegoats."

Gravel said he was uncertain whether he could subpoena Novel because of the immunity granted him.

There was an indication that Novel may also testify before the grand jury on Friday. According to Pitcher, Novel would remain under the immunity as long as he is in Louisiana for grand jury appearances.

LONG STATEMENT

Novel, presently under indictment by the Orleans Parish Grand Jury for conspiracy to commit burglary, once issued a lengthy statement saying that he knew of criminal influence and activity in Louisiana.

In his desire to have Novel returned to the state to testify, McKeithen gave Pitcher \$3,500 from his law enforcement fund to finance Novel's return.

The only indictment handed down so far by the grand jury in Baton Rouge has been against Smith. The indictment charged that Smith committed public bribery by offering Young \$25,000 to set up a meeting between himself and Partin, whose testimony was valuable in sending Teamsters head James R. Hoffa to prison.

In New Orleans, Ward said that the reported gambling ring uncovered by Cahn was not limited to the Crescent City.

"It is not limited to New Or-

leans and probably exists in every major city in the United States," said Ward. "These lay-off bookie operations involve every city in the United States and several in Canada where there is any betting on pro or college sports," he added.

HANDBOOK BETTING

Asked if handbook betting could be termed as organized crime, Ward replied: "There is not one bit of evidence to indicate that this is part of any

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Cosa Nostra or Mafia network.

"As a matter of fact, our evidence indicates that this is the typical layoff bookie operation, necessary whenever bets are made, in which small bookies who have received bets that are too large phone the bets to a larger operator," Ward said.

Ward, who is presently acting as district attorney in Garrison's absence, said that although no large-scale gambling operations are now operating in New Orleans, "this does not mean that you cannot make a bet on an athletic event in Orleans Parish and that this bet will not be called to a bookie by use of a telephone.

"You can make a bet in any city in the United States, including New Orleans, but the books themselves are not operating in Orleans Parish."

Because there is no evidence that key bookie operations now exist in Orleans Parish, Ward concluded, "I do not expect any immediate indictments to be issued by the grand jury."