

'ALLEGATIONS UNPROVEN' 5-1
3-7-68

Kohn, MCC Hit By Two Jurors

Two members of the outgoing Orleans Parish Grand Jury, which yesterday criticized conditions at Parish Prison and police district stations, released a statement today sharply criticizing the Metropolitan Crime Commission and its managing director, Aaron M. Kohn.

The statement, made at a news conference in the grand jury room of the Criminal Courts Building, chided Kohn and the commission for failing to produce proof on organized crime when called before the jury.

Mrs. Dolores V. Mason-Smith and Walter O. Eckert Sr. said the retired grand jury was accused of being "pawns of the district attorney."

THE TWO JURORS said today's report was made public to acquaint the public with the facts of the investigation. They said they spoke for all the jurors.

They said that organized crime does not exist in New Orleans. They held that for

such crime to flourish an area must be saturated with corrupt officials.

They said allegations of organized crime have been fathered by the crime commission and published with the commission's approval in Life magazine. They said that when the jury requested the same files which had been given Life magazine willingly. Kohn asked for assistance.

AFTER BEING afforded the services of police Sgt. Jerry Lankford, the jury noted, Kohn and his executive committee decided that their files

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Kohn, MCC Rapped by Two Jurors

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should not be given voluntarily to the grand jury and a court fight ensued.

They emphasized that they are not against a properly handled crime commission — only against “thoughtless individuals who, without sufficient foundation, make allegations and then fail to produce proof of these allegations and refuse to give what information they might have to the proper officials.”

The jurors contend that the community is well aware that crime exists here but that no evidence or information has been produced to substantiate the belief that organized crime flourishes here.

“SINCE IT IS the duty,” said the jurors in their report, “of each of the following individuals: Gov. John J. McKeithen, Gen. Thomas Burbank, Police Chief Joseph Giarrusso, Lt. Frederick Soule and District Attorney Garrison to ferret out any possibility of organized crime in our community, and unless we think them incapable, or lying under oath, then we must believe there is no ‘organized

crime’ in Orleans Parish.

“The weight of these officials’ testimony far outweighs the allegations of one man’s fantasy. Mr. Kohn, with his limited capabilities, deems himself an authority on the subject.

“If he is, and has information of such magnitude as organized crime in this parish, then he, as a member of a civilian community organization, with no power except publicity, should give this information to the duly appointed and-or elected officials of this community rather than excite the public and denounce these officials because they do not hold his views.”

THE JURORS also took issue with the Orleans Parish School Board for spending what they termed taxpayers’ money on advertising a bond issue.

“It is our understanding,” said the jury, “that it is quite proper for the board to take private funds and advertise, but not taxpayers’ funds to pay for any type of promotional activities.”

On the problem of juvenile crimes, they noted that names of juvenile offenders should be used by the police and publicized.

Discussing the use of Methadone in treating drug addicts, the jurors voiced its support. They also announced their endorsement of an alcoholic detoxification unit which they said could be set up in the same building with a narcotics rehabilitation unit.