

U.S. to probe 'corruption'

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The U. S. attorney's office has disclosed it is opening an investigation into official corruption in both Lake and McHenry counties.

Samuel K. Skinner, chief of special investigations, told an audience of more than 90 people Tuesday night that information had been developed linking officials in both counties to questionable conduct.

Speaking at the annual dinner of the Zion, Winthrop Harbor and Beach Park Chamber of Commerce, Skinner said conditions in Lake and McHenry counties were not as bad as in

Cook County, but added:

"I don't want to mislead you and say your counties are free of official misconduct. This isn't so."

Skinner said his office is monitoring what is happening in both counties. "This is not a blanket assault on all public officials," said Skinner, "but there is no blanket immunity from investigation for any of the 18 counties.

"We started in Cook County and are working our way westward," he said.

Skinner also said his office was gathering information on

harassment of Stanley W. Beetham, a Democrat who ran unsuccessfully for Congress against U. S. Rep. Robert McClory, R-Lake Bluff.

The FBI last week began investigating the attacks on Beetham upon request from Skinner's office.

"Our office will not stand for such harassment," said Skinner adding that "we are investigating fully the pressures put upon him (Beetham) because of his party candidacy.

"We are concerned that everyone should not be harassed if he wins or loses," he said.

Skinner spent considerable time upon the area of official corruption explaining:

"Many public officials look upon their office as an opportunity to make extra money" beyond their salaries.

"These office holders forget the office belongs to the people, and our job is to make sure they only get what they are entitled to."

Skinner said some 150 public officials have been charged with crimes including bribery, extortion and mail fraud, including 24 people in the U. S. Office of Health, Education and Welfare and 23 policemen

in this area

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now on trial in Chicago.

"We have indicted some state legislators," he added and pointed out "our conviction rate is 94 per cent.

"This means we are returning good cases," he said, adding later that the office would not indict if it didn't think it had a solid case.

"Official corruption knows no party label," he said.

"They will be prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated for substantial time," he said. He expressed concern about vote fraud not only in Cook County but the other 17 counties mak-

ing up the office's district.

Skinner credited newspapers with playing a key role in ending "official corruption. I would say the newspapers have played an important place in exposing crime as Watergate proves, if you look over the last year."

But he said the newspapers should also point out good things when conditions change. "You cannot destroy without bringing good to public attention," he said. He said he believed "public confidence in government hasn't been destroyed as much as people say."