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TUESDAY

CLASHED OVER BR PROBE

Gravel Resigned After Bussie Row

By BILL LYNCH (States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — Persistent clashes between Camille Gravel and labor leader Victor Bussie over the treatment of organized labor led to Gravel's resignation last week as chief counsel of the labor rackets commission, the States-Item has learned.

Bussie complained frequently to Gov. John J. McKeithen that labor was not being treated fairly in the investigation being carried on by the commission staff at the direction of Gravel.

Gravel, an Alexandria attorney long considered a friend of labor, and Bussie, head of the Louisiana AFL-CIO, reportedly had a row at the governor's mansion about six weeks ago over the availability of files of the investigative staff.

The two were said to have exchanged heated words at a meeting attended by Gov. McKeithen.

BUSSIE WANTED the files of the investigative staff made available to individual members of the Labor-Management Board of Inquiry, which includes two union officials, Emile Bourg and Gordon Flo-ry.

Gravel balked at letting the staff's files out to anyone, including the commission members, on an individual basis.

The blowup over the files be-

tween Bussie and Gravel pre-ceeded a clash between the two over a subpoena issued to the labor official to testify at the closed-door sessions of the commission held last week.

Bussie wanted the subpoenas that were issued to him and another union official with-rawn, and Gov. McKeithen reportedly asked that this be done. However, Gravel refused. A number of people who had been subpoenaed to the hear-ings, including Bussie, did not testify.

GRAVEL THREATENED on a number of occasions to re-sign and his performance be-fore the Civil Service Commis-sion, which was investigating employment practices of the new agency led Chairman Cecil Morgan to accept it.

The resignation was turned in to the commission 10 days before it was made public fol-lowing the conclusion of the private hearings last Friday.

Gravel's resignation brought

on a serious crisis in the com-mission. Three members of the investigating staff reportedly are considering resigning in fear of a whitewash in the probe.

Morgan assured the investi-gators that no whitewash would occur and the probers agreed to stay on.

PUBLIC HEARINGS by the commission, which tentatively had been planned for the first week in December, already have been postponed because of the need for more time to transcribe testimony from the four days of private hearings last week.

The closed-door sessions had been postponed from an ear-lier date to the middle of No- vember at the request of Gov. McKeithen, who did not want them held before the first pri-mary election.

A legal attack on consti-tutionality of the commission is expected prior to the public hearings, possibly tying the commission up in long litiga-tion.

The commission was estab-lished at a special session of the Legislature at the request of Gov. McKeithen in the wake of a crisis in industrial con-struction along the Mississippi River in the Baton Rouge area.