

## TOOK FAVORS, COPPOLA TELLS ETHICS PROBERS

By **BILL LYNCH**  
(States-Item Bureau)



CAPT. ROLAND F. COPPOLA

**BATON ROUGE** — The Louisiana Ethics Commission today took under advisement charges that State Police Capt. Roland F. Coppola of Lafayette violated the code after hearing him testify he accepted favors from a transportation and tool firm.

The commander of Troop I said tools were lent to him by a well service firm on a personal-relationship basis and that he paid \$75 for services in the delivery of bricks to him by a transportation firm from Houston, Tex.

**COPPOLA'S ATTORNEY, RUSSELL J. SCHONEKAS** of New Orleans, declared that Coppola was being made "the scapegoat for persons higher up in state government."

The ethics commission recessed the public hearing for the state police captain without deciding whether further sessions will be held. Counsel for the commission said it has presented all of its case.

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**ONE WITNESS** called by the commission, Harry Fraser of Lafayette, was granted permission to delay his appearance on the grounds he might incriminate himself in a charge of public bribery.

Fraser, formerly an employe of the Bailey Transportation Co. of Lafayette, which hauled the bricks for Coppola, said that he preferred not to testify.

"It will possibly subject me to a public bribery charge if I give the same testimony I gave at the private hearing," Fraser said.

**AFTER EXCUSING HIM**, the commission postponed a decision on whether to seek his testimony at a later date.

Schonekas told the commission at the outset, "We maintain here as we did at the private hearing that Capt. Coppola is not guilty of any wrongdoing and as the commission well knows he cooperated fully with you and your investigators.

"However, he is not willing to be the sacrificial goat for others in high positions of our state government. We are willing to be hung as a wolf but not as a lamb."

**HE DECLARED THAT** Coppola, a veteran of 15 years of state service, was entitled to the full protection of his rights by the commission.

The commission overruled his objections that the hearing was unconstitutional on the grounds that Coppola was denied access to testimony and the right of cross-examination of witnesses at a private hearing of the agency.

The agency maintained that its earlier meeting was in fact

a part of the inquiry investigation and not necessarily a hearing as such.

**SCHONEKAS SAID** outside the hearing that he was not prepared to identify the "persons higher up in state government" unless it became necessary.

Coppola is the state police captain who was suspended temporarily on the direct orders of Gov. John J. McKeithen following a Life magazine article saying he had a relationship with underworld figure Carlos Marcello.

The state policeman subsequently was restored to duty and the investigation was launched by the ethics commission. However, the charges leveled by the commission have no connection with the Life magazine articles.

**THE TROOPER WAS** specifically charged with three violations of the code of ethics:

1. He received as a favor the transportation of bricks by Bailey Transportation Co. from Houston to Lafayette.
2. He induced a highway department employe to overlook the overweight limits on the truck.
3. He received as a gift the free use of tools from Griffith Rental Tools Inc. of Lafayette to rework an oil well in which he had an interest.

Coppola said that he paid \$75 in the brick transportation case and that the truck already had been released by the highway department when he called the employe to check on it. He said it was overloaded on one axle and the release of it was not an unusual circumstance.

He also said that he was a personal friend of Griffith and received the use of the tools on a personal-friendship basis.

The commission ruled against its own attorney's attempts to question Coppola about another incident involving a trucking company, saying it was not within the charges leveled.

Gen. Thomas Burbank, director of the Department of Public Safety, described Coppola as having done an excellent job as a police officer since his assignment to Lafayette.