

Inquest Decided on In Kennedy Case

Boston

District Attorney Edmund S. Dinis said yesterday he will go ahead with an inquest into the death of Mary Jo Kopechne even though a district court judge has decided to approve the request for the inquest.

District Judge James A. Boyle of Edgartown said in a letter to Dinis the request for the inquest was "unclear" for a number of reasons.

He questioned whether Dinis was asking the judge to use his "discretionary powers" to approve the inquest or whether Dinis plans to proceed on his own, "exercis-

ing the mandatory power given to you by law."

The inquest would probe the death of Miss Kopechne, 28, of Washington, who drowned when Senator Edward Kennedy's car plunged off a bridge and flipped in a tidal pond on Chappaquiddick Island near Martha's Vineyard around midnight July 18.

HELPFUL

Dinis conceded the judge asked for "more specific language" but said the letter was "very helpful" in considering the inquest.

"I received a satisfactory response from the judge and I expect it (the inquest) will be held," the district attor-

ney said. If so, it would be the first inquest on Martha's Vineyard since a shooting death was investigated in 1941.

Dinis also said he would seek an autopsy.

Dinis said he would confer with the judge to schedule the inquest and "all witnesses pertinent to the case" would be present.

TIMING

The district attorney said he expects the inquest to be held "within two months or sooner."

Before he could act on the request, Judge Boyle said in his letter, evidence would have to be presented that Miss Kopechne's death was caused by "an unlawful act or negligence" or that the cause of death "is contrary to the published report of the medical examiner."

Police Chief Dominick J. Arena of Edgartown repeatedly has said he does not feel there was any negligence on Kennedy's part.

Meanwhile, Miss Kopechne's mother vowed to fight any attempt by Massachusetts officials to perform an autopsy.

A neighbor at the Kopechne home said that Mrs. Joseph A. Kopechne told her "any unwarranted attempt at an autopsy is out of the question — and she told me that information received so far has made it clear that an autopsy is unnecessary."

The neighbor said Mrs. Kopechne is under sedation and could not be interviewed, "But this is her feeling based on what she told me."

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