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LOUISIANA POLITICS

Article's Source Shocks Governor

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — Gov. John McKeithen appeared surprised to learn that the Metropolitan Crime Commission was the source of initial information used by a national magazine writing about organized crime in Louisiana. The crime commission, which met with Gov. McKeithen at the mansion Wednesday, frankly identified itself as the source and further added it believed the articles contained a certain amount of truth.

This was in contrast to the position taken by Gov. McKeithen the day before when he told a press conference that the articles were "completely erroneous" in their references to sinister influences on state government. After his talks with members of the board of the crime commission, the governor obviously has altered his stand somewhat, now agreeing to investigate the allegations.



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The investigation, however, he said would be confined to the state level of government. He insisted he does not plan to carry the probe of allegations of underworld influences to the parish level. The articles mentioned District Attorney Jim Garrison of Orleans and District Attorney Frank H. Langridge of Jefferson prominently.

Although there was no public rift evident after the four-hour long meeting between the crime commission and the governor, it was later reported that McKeithen told MCC director Aaron Kohn in stern language that he had set Louisiana back 10 years. The governor obviously was referring to the damage that may have been inflicted on Louisiana's national image, a point the chief executive is particularly sensitive to in his industrial inducement efforts.

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THE CRIME COMMISSION HELD FAST to its position and said it has been trying to get its story across for the past 14 years. Contrary to the belief that adverse publicity may have hurt the state, the MCC expressed the opinion that it provided the first opportunity to get the ear of a responsible public official. The MCC officials said they have been unable to impress either Mayor Victor Schiro or Garrison with the existence of organized crime.

At the same time, the MCC was high in its praise of McKeithen for taking steps to launch an investigation. The commission president, E. C. Upton, said the group is assured that something will be done.

In ruling out an investigation of Garrison, the governor is being consistent in his relations with the controversial district attorney. McKeithen has previously refused to step into angry situations involving Garrison and the Legislature, Garrison and the judges, and Garrison and the crime commission. He declined to get involved in Garrison's investigation of the Kennedy assassination, practically holding off Attorney General Jack Gremillion (a political foe of the district attorney). He told the press after the MCC meeting that he was saying for the fourth time that day that he would not be investigating Garrison.

Members of the crime commission reported afterwards that the governor had received them cordially and there had been no hostility involved during the long meeting. The only time the governor became angry (he could be heard outside) was when he was referring to the magazine articles, which he said set the state back 10 years.

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IN THE STILL DULL GUBERNATORIAL campaign, things might pick up in another week or so. Congressman John Rarick, the chief opponent of Gov. McKeithen, has scheduled an appearance at a rally of the Citizens of Greater New Orleans Sept. 19 at the Municipal Auditorium.

In what already has been described as an abnormal governors' race, things have been abnormally quiet thus far with time running out as the Nov. 4 first primary approaches.

McKeithen, apparently piqued by the appearance of Rarick with former Alabama Gov. George Wallace in Baton Rouge a week ago, hastened to inform the people that Louisiana has less integration in its public schools than any other state in the South, including Alabama.

McKeithen jumped on some of the people campaigning with Rarick (not mentioning names) who spoke at a rally in Jonesboro. He accused them of adding fuel to troubles over the school desegregation problems.

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HE SAID AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, "I'm advised that some people stood up in Jonesboro the other night. You know, up there we've got some people — some of them running for office—who, as soon as they hear where there might be some trouble and they might get some people killed, they take off in high gear to get up there and see if they can't get it started.

"So they went to Jonesboro the other night to see if they couldn't get the white people so mad they'd start shooting colored people. Then when they got some colored people shooting, the colored people start shooting back, and are trying to incite a civil war."

The man who did most of the "rough talking," the governor said, was not one of his opponents.

He said that he could not compare their remarks with those of H. Rap Brown, Negro agitator, because they were more subtle.

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ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNOR HAS DECLARED he does not plan to call a special session of the Legislature over the grant-in-aid issue, there are some supporters of the program who are advocating such a session.

Meetings are being held to see if some new course of action might be taken by the state to finance grants to private school students who lost them when a federal tribunal held the grants unconstitutional.