

# Abolish Grand Jury System, Bagert Urges

By PATRICIA GORMIN

It is time to abolish the grand jury system in Louisiana, according to Criminal District Judge Bernard J. Bagert.

Branding the system as archaic, he said "the grand jury is more an instrument of oppression than protection."

**ADDRESSING THE** Civil Council of New Orleans at the Roosevelt Hotel, Judge Bagert said the system causes loss of time because of pre-trial indictments and the only thing which gives it prestige is that "it is 700 or 800 years old."

He said cases presented to the grand jury here are "getting to be a joke."

"I am not speaking against any of the civil rights decisions handed down by the Supreme Court lately," he said, "but now every time a Chinaman goes before the grand jury, the question arises if there were any Chinamen on the jury."

"It's getting to be ridiculous," he claimed.

**HE SAID** A district attorney, who is the counsel for the grand jury, "could conceivably do much damage."

Judge Bagert said a DA could "abuse the grand jury by slanting his interpretation of evidence" and sway the jurors who are not knowledgeable about the case.

He also said that when a person is subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury, "he is encircled with a cloud of doubt . . . this is the fallacy of the grand jury . . . it is supposed to protect people's rights."

**HE CALLED FOR** amendment to the Constitution to do away with the grand jury. He said that all criminal cases can be presented by a bill of information or charge.

The criminal district court, not the DA, is, ultimately, the protector of the defendant and the public, he said.