

CANDIDATES AT TULANE FORUM

# Garrison Absence Issue in Debate

By ALLAN KATZ

The absence of Jim Garrison from public appearances in the district attorney's campaign was a major topic of discussion last night at a downtown debate between the DA candidates and Garrison's stand-in.

On hand at the Gentilly Christian Church, 1551 Mirabeau, were candidates Charles Ray Ward, Ross Scaccia and Harry Connick. Representing Garrison was First Assistant DA James L. Alcock. Garrison has made few campaign appearances with the other candidates in the last six weeks, usually sending Alcock to these groups that will accept a substitute for the candidate.

WARD AND SCACCIA both made references to Garrison's absence.

"I sympathize with Mr. Alcock," Ward said. "When I was first assistant DA, Mr. Garrison was troubled by recurring bouts of the flu.

"More recently, he says he's been troubled by bronchitis, viral encephalitis, a slipped disc and a bad big toe — all of which have prevented him from facing our questions and those of the voting public.

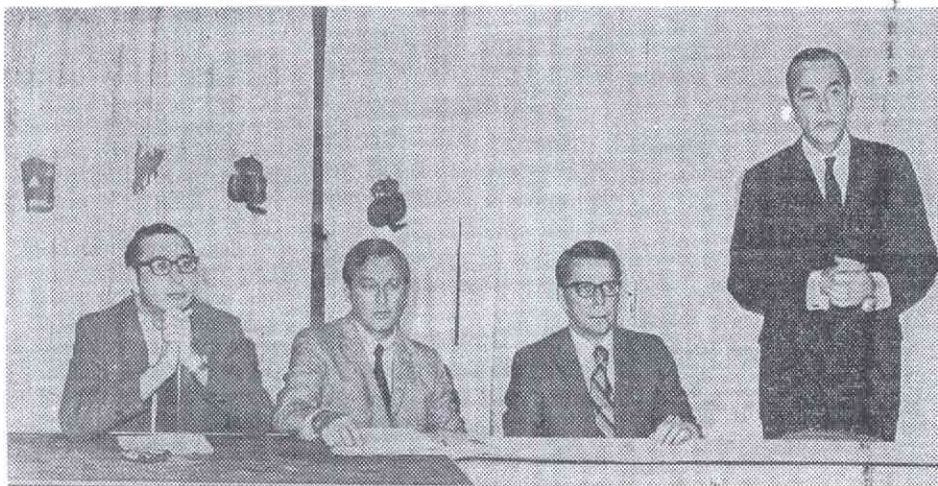
"I honestly believe that if Mr. Garrison is too ill to appear here or anywhere else during this campaign, he is also too ill to be DA for the people of New Orleans. This issue isn't raised by me so much as it is raised by the absence of Mr. Garrison from this campaign. Where is he?"

LATER, AFTER Alcock made a statement for Garrison on the control of organized crime, Scaccia commented:

"I hate to disagree with Mr. Alcock whom I respect. If Mr. Alcock were district attorney rather than Mr. Garrison, I probably wouldn't be running.

"If Mr. Garrison were here, I would be pleased to disagree with him but he has chosen to absent himself from these confrontations."

The meeting in the church's recreation room was sponsored by Issues Forum, a non-partisan



DA CANDIDATE HARRY CONNICK, standing, addresses a meeting at the Gentilly Christian Church last night. From left, Issues Forum panelist ROBERT E. COLE; DA candidate ROSS SCACCIA and first assistant DA JAMES L. ALCOCK, who substituted for DA Jim Garrison. A fourth DA candidate, CHARLES RAY WARD, arrived late at the meeting.

group associated with Tulane University's Urban Studies Center. Issues Forum arranges meetings for interested groups with the aim of furthering discussion of the issues in the upcoming election.

AT ONE POINT in the evening, members of the Issues Forum panel and the audience tangled verbally with Alcock, Scaccia and Ward over whether the city's present system of criminal justice allows criminals back on the streets soon after they have been arrested. Connick was not present at that point, having left the meeting for another commitment.

The case in question involved James Stroy, a man arrested and charged six times between Feb. 4, 1967 and Aug. 1, 1969, who was charged the sixth time with a burglary and then allowed to go free on a \$1,000 recognizance bond. He has not been heard from since.

ALCOCK EXPLAINED that in Stroy's case, the DA's office had no way of knowing Stroy had been arrested. Alcock said a judge freed Stroy without knowing of his previous record. The first assistant DA said he knows no way to avoid such lapses.

A panelist, Robert E. Cole, argued: "That doesn't seem good enough. What this really

suggests is that the system we have doesn't work. Why can't the DA's office know when a man is arrested? Why can't the judge check with the DA before he releases a man? Why can't an assistant DA be permanently stationed at the Central Lock-up? What's wrong with all the high-powered communications equipment we're always told about?"

Ward and Scaccia said that in fairness to Alcock, it is difficult to ascertain who should be freed and on what kind of bond.

THE AUDIENCE OBJECTED, saying that the crux of the election is that someone has to find a way to make the system of criminal justice effective.

A woman in the audience rose to say: "It's easy for you men who work in criminal law to say that's the way things are, but we citizens think somebody needs to find a way to keep people who have been arrested six times for burglary from getting out on their own recognizance."

Before he left the meeting, Connick said 1,100 persons accused of such crimes as burglary, armed robbery, narcotics offenses and child molesting have skipped bail bonds totaling \$1.2 million during the Garrison administration.

"WHAT YOU NEED is a

lawyer and an administrator in the DA's office," he said. "I promise that I will both represent the poeple and administer the DA's office properly if I am elected."

Scaccia said he feels the bail bond issue has been "blown out of proportion."

He said the real issue is the handling of the Clay Shaw case by Garrison.

"I honestly don't know how Mr. Garrison has gotten away with fooling the people for so long," he said. "I heard the witnesses in the Clay Shaw case and they were so bad I couldn't believe my ears. Yet, there are people in New Orleans who plan to vote for Mr. Garrison. I don't know how to explain it."

ALCOCK SAID Garrison has given the city a good DA's office. He said Garrison has developed a staff of full-time assistant DAs who have compiled a record of 85 per cent wins in jury cases and have never lost a murder case.

"Mr. Garrison deserves to be reelected," Alcock said.

Ward, who arrived late, said "the Clay Shaw debacle, the Parish Prison scandal and the police burglary scandal all indicate the city is in a mess and needs a change—particularly in the DA's office."

WARD PLEDGED to inaugurate new rehabilitation programs for first offenders while cracking down on professional criminals.

He said he would develop half-way houses for first offenders, introduce an education program in the schools on the dangers of drugs and fight in the legislature to reform the state penitentiary at Angola.