

TESTIFIES IN D.C.

'Apathy' to Crime Lashed by Kohn

(States-Item Bureau)

WASHINGTON — Organized crime in Louisiana and elsewhere will not be conquered until the average citizen sheds his apathy and does something about it, the managing director of the New Orleans Metropolitan Crime Commission told a Congressional Committee today.

Syndicated crime has "grown to proportions which have caused it to be called America's biggest industry, mainly because the private sector has both stimulated and tolerated it," Aaron M. Kohn told a House government operations subcommittee.

Effective governmental action to combat the problem is "relatively recent and still fragmented," Kohn said.

"BUT EVEN less has been done to fill the need for citizen initiative in reducing demands for underworld goods and services, rejecting corrupt alliances with officials, and halting commercial alliances which give wealth and false respectability to racketeers."

Kohn commended the crime reporting of several national media, including Life Magazine and the Wall Street Journal but said the New Orleans newspapers have not been aggressive enough.

In response to a question by Rep. Gilbert Gude, R-Md., Kohn said New Orleans is "a one-publisher city, the newspapers do not with any sort of continuity tackle organized crime reporting."

He said New Orleans television stations, particularly Channel 6, have been more aggressive than the newspapers.

EVER SINCE the commission held meetings with station officials, television has been "doing some amazing things," Kohn said.

Their reporting "more than anything else has brought about the silence of people who had denied the existence of organized crime," he testified.

Kohn said the most effective citizens' tools are privately financed bodies such as the New Orleans Crime Commission, which since being organized in 1954, has worked to expose corruption and bring improvements in police, court, prosecution and correctional operations.

KOHN SAID the New Orleans commission has had the "dedication of responsible citizens willing to withstand public vilification, harassment and threats to economic well being from those allied with more profiting from an organized crime status quo deeply rooted in more than a century of continuous existence in Louisiana."

Kohn's testimony also included a listing of what he said are the commission's major accomplishments and criticism of Orleans Parish Dis-

trict Attorney Jim Garrison, Jefferson Parish District Attorney Frank H. Langridge and State Attorney General Jack P. F. Gremillion.

He said that Garrison and his staff have "blocked our efforts to have grand juries probe the influence of the Cosa Nostra and other syndicate operations."

IN JEFFERSON, Kohn told the committee, the "collusion and nonfeasance of . . . Langridge is exceeded only by his silence when challenged by (Sheriff Alwynn) Cronvich, by the press and by our crime commission."

Kohn said that Gremillion "consistently refuses or evades use of his discretionary powers to act against misconduct of the sheriffs, district attorneys and judges" in the state.

Kohn was the leadoff witness as the legal and monetary affairs subcommittee continued hearings into the federal effort against organized crime.

Kohn urged President Nixon to expand his nine-week old National Council on Organized Crime to include one or more persons from the private sector.