

Text of Garrison's Statement

Here is the text of District Attorney Jim Garrison's statement in answer to federal charges of violating gambling laws and accepting bribes to protect pinball machine gambling in New Orleans:

"I have waited until the federal authorities finished their Roman Circus before attempting to reply to their carefully contrived charges. They have employed faked evidence, a key witness who lies according to fit their pattern, elaborate frame-ups, spliced and faked 'tape recordings', and every other conceivable device to make the innocent appear guilty long before the beginning of any trial. Because they know that I am entirely innocent and would be acquitted of their elaborately contrived 'evidence', they have chosen to release it in advance, thus accomplishing a tableau of wholesale corruption of my office.

"The federal government's great advantage in conducting an advance trial in the news media is its freedom to release evidence untested for authenticity by cross-examination. In short, in its 'trial by news media' the federal government has already succeeded in so polluting the air about myself and my office that it virtually has undone eight years of work by myself and my staff to build an office that was honest and incorruptible — and remains to this day honest and incorruptible. I am not sure as to how many citizens have been affected by the pollution from this trial by the premature release of 'evidence' but the advance prejudice accomplished in our city — not to mention the entire nation — hardly needs to be described.

"PERHAPS it is now hopeless, in view of the thick pollution of prejudice which has been created by these federal authorities and which hangs over the city like a thick, grey pall of smog over the city, however if I can get a word in edgewise — between the daily 'accounts' of my alleged corruption, I would like to say a few words in my behalf.

"Since the day I took office as District Attorney, I have never fixed a single case. I have never taken a dollar in

bribery. I have never done anything to help the pinball business — even though in Louisiana pinball machines are not illegal. Nor have I ever instructed anyone on my staff to give any special consideration to pinball cases — or any other gambling cases. I have never conversed with a legislator to aid in obstructing a change in the State law which legalizes pinball machines. Nor have I ever once discussed the subject, or anything relating to aiding the pinball business or gambling, with the Governor of Louisiana.

"To the contrary, we have prosecuted pinball cases vigorously and systematically during my eight years in office. Our conviction rate in that area has to be one of the highest conviction rates in the office, with the possible exception of murder with regard to which no defendant has ever walked out of the courtroom with an acquittal since I took office. In other words, anyone in the pinball business who even attempted to give me a dollar would have to be crazy.

"AT THE arraignment in the federal magistrate's court, I did not recognize my so-called 'co-conspirators' in the pinball business—not having seen them before, I cannot help but feel that most certainly they must have been wondering what they were supposed to have paying me for, since I never rendered them, or their business, any

kind of service in my eight years in office.

"I believe most Americans are well aware that there are areas in their federal government which are not what they once were long ago. These sectors have steadily mushroomed in their influence and power until they have reached a point where their ability to dominate and invade individual State governments is almost irresistible. The 'sovereignty' of the individual States is rapidly becoming a nostalgic relic of the past as military socialism, largely concealed behind bouquets of "benefits" presumably dispensed by an altruistic national government with a giant heart of marshmallow. Even though I had

become aware of the danger of the ever-increasing power of federal police agencies, I must confess my eyebrows were raised a year or two back when I read that a special police "task force" had arrived in New Orleans to cope with the "crime situation" here.

"IT WAS perfectly obvious — inasmuch as Washington, D.C., is the area of heaviest crime in the country — that what was really needed was a task force from Louisiana to investigate the massive prevalence of crime in Washington, D.C. Naturally, this would have presented logistical problems because the volume of crime in Washington would need not merely a 'task force' of a few men, but at least half a dozen battalions. And if the task force were assigned, not merely to crime in general, but to crime in the lofty reaches of the federal government, our Louisianan task force in Washington, would have to approximate the size of the Seventh Army in World War II.

"HOWEVER, let me show you the kind of evidence to which elements of our federal government will resort to when a man stands in its way — as, for example, when a man insists on communicating to other Americans, by television and by a book, the truth about John Kennedy's assassination, about our aggression and cruelty in Viet Nam and about the rise of supremacy of the warfare sector of our government. This is a sector which has many tentacles, not the least of which is the 'Justice' Department.

"Here is how they set you up:

"Recently, I was informed by Pershing Gervais—whom I had known since we were in the Army together when we were both nineteen years old—that it was urgent that he see me at my house that night. He said he would be by at about eight o'clock. When he arrived—about 8:30, he said he had to see me privately in my study—a small office in my house—and that he was in a rush because he had to catch a plane. He added that he had so little time that he

has left the engine of his car running.

"HE THEN handed me an envelope which he asked me to hold for him for several days. It was unsealed so I glanced inside. I saw a large number of bills, the smallest denomination of which appeared to be \$50. I looked up at him to ask what this was all about and he cut me short by saying he had no time to explain, to please just stick it in the desk for him and he would explain later. I vaguely recall shrugging and doing so, whereupon he left in haste. I had had a long day at the office and went to bed right afterwards.

"The next morning, when I completed dressing and was

coming down the stairs, the doorbell rang. One of my children opened the door. A number of United States Marshals entered and announced to me that I was under arrest for violation of the Organized Crime Act of 1970. They then asked where my office was. I told them and they entered, opened the desk and removed the envelope.

"They then produced a mimeographed copy of the formal charges against me. One of the first things I noticed, to my astonishment, was a paragraph stating that I had traveled around the country as a representative of the pinball industry, a suggested dimension of criminality on my part for which, even now, I must give them credit for imagination.

"FURTHER DOWN on the list of mimeographed charges of my violation of the Organized Crime Act of 1970, were a list of Fifty Dollar bills and their serial numbers. They pulled them out of the envelope and corroborated the numbers in the envelope with the numbers on the mimeographed charges. (as it happened, incidentally I had neither touched nor counted the bills because they were not mine). I told them how they had been delivered in the envelope to be held, the previous night, but I found little interest. I then added that we had a safe in the closet where we had our own money—it had approximately \$350.00 in

it—and they were welcome to look into it. However, their mission was accomplished and there was no interest beyond the envelope which had so briefly lain in my drawer, awaiting the return of my hurried friend.

"I was then escorted to various federal offices. In one dark room, equipped with what apparently was an ultra-violet light, my hands were photographed and re-photographed. Since I had never touched the money—which obviously had been coated with a special substance—having no occasion to do so, many of the Polaroid photographs had to be thrown in the waste basket, since my hands obviously did not produce the desired purple results. Finally, on the tips of my fingers—where I had taken the envelope from its owner—were tips of purple, from the envelope. They settled for a number of photographs of these tip-marks—which simply corroborated what I had explained to them in the first place—and I was then launched on my criminal career by being mugged and printed, usually surrounded and held by the shoulder lest I escape.

"I HAVE GONE into some detail so that the average person can appreciate the ease with which an over-powerful federal government can frame whomever it chooses. They do not have to kill you, although they have done that often enough that the point scarcely needs argument. The point I seek to make is that in a warfare state, engaged in increasing its national and worldwide power, individual freedom is but a fragment of rhetoric when the individual freedom is but a fragment of rhetoric when the individual gets in the way of the thrust towards power or insists on communicating to other Americans what is really happening to their country behind the band music, and the noble words.

"This is not the only frame I have been drawn into in recent months. I confess to a weakness for trusting too much, especially where I served in the Army with a man a quarter of a century back. Undoubtedly, I will find

that other similarly, meaningless acts have been reconstructed into 'evidence' of organized crime activity.

"I simply offer this as an example of the simplicity and skill with which a federal frame-up can be established. It is accomplished in minutes, yet to the average person unaware of the full background, of the power considerations involved, it appears indeed to be 'evidence.'

"THE SAME is true of tapes, which can be released to the newspapers as 'incontrovertible evidence' of involvement in organized crime. Example: A speaks into his tape and says something like, 'Jim, we have all the boys lined up. They have agreed to pay you X amount and all you have to do is keep producing for them.' A then proceeds to B's house, where he says with his taping recorder strapped on — something like: 'Jim, I just saw a poll on the Governor's race. Do you realize you're in third place?' B can be expected to reply: 'Are you serious? That's great, That's really great!' After a bit of splicing of tapes, then replaying on a new tape, you have a tape recording of what appears to be B agreeing to a deal to violate a federal statute. The results can be accomplished by splicing tapes are what makes them inadmissible in most courts. That tapes can be made more effective, however, by producing federal agents to testify that they heard the ultimate spliced results it occurred.

"However, I think most of us all know from the Warren Commission inquiry and the great federal 'investigation' that all too many federal agents will testify to what is expected of them. And I think most of us know, sadly enough, that at the very highest level there are elements of our federal government which, to put it mildly, are corrupt. There is no better example of this than the historic tragedy of Viet Nam, which now stands as a mirror to the world of the American government at its highest levels of power.

"Ironically, it is hardly more than a month since I have returned from television appearances across the coun-

try in which I have communicated to other Americans, as strongly as I could, how the continued build-up of federal power, of military socialism, of our brutal imperialism extending across the globe, is destroying our country.

"APPARENTLY, I communicated not wisely but too well. Not the least of the results of the federal government's counteraction is that it makes it virtually impossible, for a long time, for me to get across that very point which the government has so long concealed: That agents working in behalf of a part of our own government murdered President Kennedy because he was blocking the road to war in Vietnam. He was in the way of the Pentagon, for which Southeast Asia literally

is the treasure trove of the planet, with its invaluable reserves of oil, magnesium, tungsten, chrome, bauxite. This priceless area of mineral wealth not only dwarfs the hidden treasure chests of Captain Kidd a millionfold but is a treasure that the Pentagon and the present administration have not the slightest intention of abandoning. The technological escalation of the war, even as the infantrymen return home, makes that clear enough.

"As to the present charges against me, and as to the future charges which the federal government doubtlessly will manufacture in order to make the present charges more believable, let me conclude with one more point:

"I have built one of the best District Attorney's Offices in the country. It is an honest office and it has maintained its integrity through the eight years I have been District Attorney. I have similarly done my job as District Attorney with uninterrupted honesty and integrity during those eight years. And I do not pretend it is because I am uniquely honest or of unique integrity.

"It is because I have never forgotten how the people of this city, a little more than eight years ago ignored all of the odds and all previous New Orleans history, and elected a man without an organization as District Attorney. They did this out of hope and trust.

"I have never forgotten that hope and trust that they placed in me. I have never violated that hope and trust in any way—and I never will.

"This is why the federal government is trying its case in the press and will continue to do so in preliminary proceedings. They will not be as anxious for a real trial to occur because they too, know, that I am innocent and that I have never violated the trust of the people."