

Governor: Let MCC Challenge DA

By BILL LYNCH

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BATON ROUGE — Gov. John J. McKeithen today told the Metropolitan Crime Commission to instigate its own action to remove Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison from office, rejecting a bid by the anti-crime group that he take steps in the case.

"I am advised by our attorneys that I do have the right to initiate removal procedures against him in a court of competent jurisdiction," McKeithen told the MCC, "but that you and the commission also have the identical right, which is no less strong than my own.

"In view of the fact that you are Mr. Garrison's constituent—not I—I feel that it would be proper to allow you to have the privilege of commencing the actions which you feel are proper under the circumstances."

THE GOVERNOR'S comments were in response to a request by the crime commission that he take steps to remove Garrison after the DA was arrested on charges of bribery in pinball protection payoffs and allegations he blocked grand jury investigations of pinball operations.

C. Alvin Bertel Jr., president of the MCC, and Aaron M. Kohn, managing director, asked McKeithen "to immediately correct the condition which makes the critical role of prosecutor in Orleans Parish no longer trustworthy and dependable as a protector of the innocent and convictor of the guilty.

"It is suggested that you serve the public need by asking that Mr. Garrison resign and, should he fail to promptly do so, to use your constitutional authority to initiate removal proceedings."

McKeithen, a close political ally of Garrison, has resisted criticism of the controversial district attorney since the charges were filed by the Justice Department.

THE GOVERNOR, who addressed himself along the same lines at a press conference yesterday, noted that countercharges had been filed against U.S. Atty. Gerald Gallinghouse and the federal crime strike force chief John Wall.

"My feelings about this," McKeithen said in his letter to the MCC released today, "have been buttressed by the criminal charges which have now been made by Mr. Garrison against the U.S. attorney and others connected with the U.S. Department of Justice, which I presume have been instituted by affidavit also."

The governor then went on to say that he had proposed legislation to outlaw gambling-type pinball machines in the legislature in 1970 and was criticized severely by lawmakers when he spoke to the House urging passage.

Another effort to pass anti-pinball legislation in the 1971 session of the legislature also was turned aside.

McKEITHEN TOLD his press conference he thinks the legislature would pass such a bill now.

"Some are going to rue the day," he said of those who voted against the bill.

The actions of the legislature looked very suspicious, he said, with some lawmakers from some areas of the state that didn't even have a machine taking a peculiar interest in the subject.

In commenting on Garrison at his press conference, the governor said he had never been asked by the district attorney to do anything about pinball machine legislation.

He recalled that without Garrison's support in the 1963-64 primaries, he would not have been elected.