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Garrison-District Attorneys 400

By BILL CRIDER

Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS AP - Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison angrily locked the National District Attorneys Association out of its convention banquet here Saturday night when officials of the organization recoiled aghast at a proposed speech by the volatile New Orleans prosecutor.

Garrison, whose Kennedy assassination probe roused sharp controversy around the nation, accused the association of attempted censorship of his planned remarks regarding President Johnson, the federal government and the federal courts.

"I will not submit to any censorship or any kind of limitations on my comments," stormed Garrison.

William J. Raggio, Reno, Nev., district attorney and president of the association, said Garrison's actions "were completely irrational." He said the association, somewhat dubious about meeting here because of the controversial assassination probe, had been assured its mid-winter session would not be used as a forum by Garrison.

The abrupt cancellation came after Garrison conferred with Raggio and William Cahn, Mineola, N.Y., district attorney and association vice president.

They set up the conference after Garrison statements at a convention brunch on Wednesday resulted in the New Orleans official being charged with civil contempt in federal district court.

The some 600 persons attending the convention, unable to get into the banquet room of the French Quarter's Monteleone Hotel, trooped out to various restaurants around the city for their food.

Garrison said the \$3,300 worth of roast beef dinner on the banquet menu would be sent to three orphanages here.

Raggio said the meeting with Garrison, came after some members reported Garrison had told them that his brunch attack on the federal judiciary would pale compared to what he would say at the banquet.

Garrison came in and said, "What's the trouble?," said Raggio. "I told him there was lots of concern about reports of what he planned to say tonight. He said, 'well, apparently people are interested enough to come to see me-some 600 showed up.'"

The Nevada prosecutor said at a hastily called news conference he told Garrison that in view of his remarks Wednesday there was some concern among members that what he planned to say Saturday night might lack propriety.

"He told me, 'That's no problem. We're going to have a nice little banquet. I'm just going to say a few words. I'm going to tell the people about the - - - - - federal courts and the - - - - - President, they ought to hang him.'"

"I broke in there and said, 'Well, Jim, if that's what you're going to say, I'm going to ask you not to speak.'"

Raggio said Garrison turned to Charles Ward, an assistant who had accompanied him, and said, "Cancel the banquet. Bolt the doors and guard them. Don't let anybody in."

Garrison then turned to him, Raggio continued, and said, "You're not running this show, I am."

Vice President Hubert Humphrey originally was scheduled as the banquet speaker, Raggio said, but couldn't make it. The first any association officer knew of Garrison's plan to make the address, he said, came when they arrived here and looked through the program.

Cahn, who was to receive the association's distinguished service award at the banquet, was given his plaque at an impromptu ceremony in his hotel room.

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In the Wednesday talk, Garrison charged that a three-judge federal court's recent decision that Life magazine correspondent David Chandler didn't have to appear before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury came, because the weekly publication is withholding evidence of the Kennedy assassination at the direction of the federal government.

Chandler's lawyer asked U.S. Dist. Court Judge James A. Comiskey to cite Garrison for civil contempt. The matter comes up in court next Wednesday.

Garrison launched an investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy, which occurred in November 1963 at Dallas, Tex., about 18 months ago. Garrison claims the slaying was plotted in New Orleans. He has charged two men with conspiracy in the case.

The official Warren Commission report said New Orleans-born Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the presidential slaying.

After the banquet cancellation, Garrison issued a statement.

The road which has brought us to our present dilemma, in which the executive power of the government has become virtually absolute, is paved with compromises made by public officials," said Garrison. "In the course of my efforts to call attention to the truth, and to the role of the federal government in seeking to suppress it, I will not make any compromise of any kind." Raggio said Garrison had no right to cancel the banquet, "It was paid for by the \$50 registration fee paid by each of the delegates," he said. "The dinner was one of the items covered by the fee."

In a special meeting Saturday night, the association board of directors:

-Decided that if Garrison released any information on the uproar, the association was to present its side at a press conference.

-Endorsed Raggio's conduct.

-Said Garrison should take steps to reimburse delegates for the missed dinner.

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