

33 CHARGES LODGED

'I'm Not Guilty,' Ourso Contends

PLAQUEMINE, La. (AP)—"I'm not guilty, that's all," said the suspended sheriff of Iberville Parish after 33 criminal charges including theft, public bribery and extortion were lodged against him.

Atty. Gen. Jack Gremillion made the charges in bills of information filed here yesterday against Jessel M. Ourso. It was the first time criminal charges had been placed against the sheriff.

HE WAS suspended from office because an audit showed his accounts in arrears and a civil action to remove him from office has been initiated by the state.

Ourso made bonds totalling \$11,550 after appearing at the court house voluntarily. Arraignments on the charges was set for 9 a. m. Tuesday.

The 22 public bribery counts charged Ourso received a total of \$4,314 in weekly payments from Natural Gas Co. of Houston, Tex., "with the intent that the conduct of said Jessel M. Ourso would be influenced with regards to his position and duty as sheriff . . ."

The malfeasance count charged that Ourso refused to arrest a man identified as Ivan Mendoze although the sheriff had "received knowledge that the crime of receiving stolen goods . . . occurred . . ."

The incidents took place in 1966 and 1967. The six charges alleged that a total of \$6,020 was taken from the sheriff's office by Ourso.

ONE OF the bills alleged that Ourso threatened a vice president of Natural Gas Co. with blowing up his office unless a person identified as Elsie Campbell was hired.

Another count charged that Ourso threatened an employe of Lipsey, Inc., to get a job for his brother.

The sheriff was also charged with an assault on a Lipsey employe, Tommy Lambeth.

The theft charges stemmed from payments made to Ourso for the service. Ourso maintained that it was a private business and the money derived from it did not belong in the sheriff's salary fund.