

# 2 Lawyers Indicted

Two attorneys have been indicted by the Orleans Parish grand jury on charges of corrupt influencing in the case of alleged attempts to bribe a former assistant district attorney not to press for collection of bail bond forfeitures.

Attorneys Milton P. Masinter and Thomas Toranto Jr. are accused of accepting \$12,500 between Aug. 20 and Dec. 31 last year with the intention of influencing the conduct of Charles Ray Ward, then first assistant district attorney.

WARD HAD requested a grand jury investigation of the matter. After the jury returned the two indictments to Criminal District Judge Bernard J. Bagert late yesterday afternoon, Ward said the jury's action cleared him of wrongdoing.

The former assistant DA

said the fact that the attorneys were charged with corrupt influencing rather than with bribery indicates there was no allegation he accepted money.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm clear," said Ward.

The indictments allege that Masinter and Toranto accepted "or offered to accept" the money from Century Surety Underwriters of Indiana

Inc. with the intention of influencing Ward in two ways:

One would be to cause Ward to withhold processing writs claiming forfeitures supposedly owed by Maryland National Insurance Co. The other effect would be to influence Ward to withhold objections to motions by Maryland National to set aside bond for-

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## Indict 2 Lawyers

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feiture judgments.

"It is a great feeling to be cleared by the grand jury," said Ward. "This grand jury has displayed that independent characteristic that has made the American jury system the best system of crimi-

nal justice in the world. In their hands I put my future, my reputation and my good name, and they have not disappointed me."

"Unfortunately," he added, "there will always be a few who will remember only the investigation and not the results and decision of the grand jury."

"TO THOSE people who have the slightest doubt of my innocence," Ward stated, "let me point out that (District Attorney) Jim Garrison has always been able to indict one who either breathes, walks or talks. In spite of his best effort, in spite of my best persuasion, this grand jury rejected these efforts and cleared me."

Yesterday's indictments concluded one phase of the jury's investigation of the bail bond case.

Assistant DA William R. Alford recommended bonds of \$500 for each defendant. Judge Bagert said he would allow the two attorneys to sign recognizance bonds in the same amount.

WARD HAS contended that an attorney for Maryland National, Ralph L. Kaskell, attempted to force a settlement from the DA's office on the bond forfeitures.

Ward asked First Assistant DA James L. Alcock and jury foreman Fernand S. Lapeyre if the investigation would continue. Alcock said he did not know and Lapeyre reserved comment.

In his letter to the grand jury last month requesting the investigation, Ward alleged that Kaskell attempted to force the DA's office into settling a \$629,000 bond forfeiture claim against Maryland National with a \$100,000 compromise.

KASKELL, CLAIMS Ward, threatened to reveal allegations by William Hardy Davis, an official of Century Surety Underwriters, that Davis dispatched bribe money through Masinter and Toranto which was intended for Ward.

Ward emphatically has denied receiving the money.

In an affidavit made public by Ward, Davis stated he never met Ward and did not know whether Ward ever received the money supposedly dispatched to him.

Davis, now of Atlanta, testified before the grand jury in its first session on the case Thursday of last week. Garrison also went before the jury at that time.