

# Threat Not Serious-- Landrieu

Mayoral candidate Moon Landrieu today denied he ever made a serious threat on the life of Metropolitan Crime Commission director Aaron M. Kohn.

Landrieu acknowledged that in "a moment of anger" several weeks ago, he did threaten to "destroy" the MCC if elected mayor but later apologized to that body

(Editor's Note: Unanswered is the question of why the Crime Commission, if it took Mr. Landrieu's alleged threat seriously, waited until two days before the election before making it public. Why did the commission not take legal action immediately if it believed the alleged threat to be serious?)

and thought the matter was closed until it was injected into the mayoral campaign at the last minute.

The candidate said he was goaded into anger by Kohn's repeated repetition of charges that Landrieu had a conflict of interest because his law firm represents TAC Amusement Co., a pinball machine distributor.

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ment Co., a pinball machine distributor.

LANDRIEU SAID HE has answered the charges to Kohn repeatedly but Kohn continued to air them even after saying that he believed in Landrieu's innocence.

The issue arose out of a conversation between Landrieu and Joseph W. Simon Jr., executive vice president of the Chamber of Commerce of the New Orleans Area, on Nov. 12. Although the principals differ somewhat on what actually was said, it resulted in Landrieu's subsequent apology to the board and a controversy that has enlivened the eve of the electoral showdown between Landrieu and James E. Fitzmorris Jr. tomorrow.

IN A STATEMENT published this morning, MCC president Dr. J. D. Grey said the MCC board was sent the following message by Landrieu. If (Kohn) did not stop referring to his relationship with TAC, Mr. Landrieu would kill him; and if elected mayor, Mr. Landrieu would dedicate his first four years to the destruction of the MCC.

Simon today acknowledged he was the bearer of the message from Landrieu to the MCC, but he did not say there was a specific threat. What Simon said Landrieu said was:

"I'm so mad I could kill the . . .!"

KOHN SAID TODAY: "I do not believe that Mr. Landrieu had the slightest intention to carry out this reported threat to kill me."

THIS AFTERNOON, Kohn, Simon and Dr. Grey held a news conference at International House to give their position in the dispute. Simon gave a chronology of events as he had to the States-Item earlier in the day.

The three said they had no statement to release but simply wanted to answer newsmen's questions.

Defending his record today, Landrieu pointed out he has continually recused himself in City Council voting whenever any hint of a conflict of interest has cropped up.

Landrieu said he regrets making the statement that would "destroy" the MCC, but thought his apology had satisfied that body and expressed surprise that the matter has again been injected into the campaign.

Simon, interviewed by a States-Item reporter, gave this account of the events:

The chamber official said he was assigned the task of inviting Fitzmorris and Landrieu to speak at a chamber banquet following the election. (Only the winner of the election was to speak.)

SIMON SAID HE got an acceptance from Fitzmorris and met Landrieu Nov. 12 during a city council hearing. He said Landrieu came out of the meeting to talk to him.

He said Landrieu first de-

clined the invitation on grounds the chamber was "enemy territory." He said Landrieu then accepted the invitation, then began to berate him about Kohn.

"When are you going to get that . . . off my back?" he quoted Landrieu as asking. He said Landrieu charged that Kohn was going around mak-

ing personal attacks on him, Landrieu.

SIMON SAID HE told Landrieu that wasn't possible because Kohn has been out of town but Landrieu continued.

"I'm so mad I could kill that . . ." he quoted Landrieu as saying. He said he told Landrieu to calm down. Landrieu, he said, continued;

"If I'm elected mayor, I'll dedicate the next four years to the destruction of the Metropolitan Crime Commission." He told Simon he wanted him to go back to the MCC board and tell the members that, Simon said.

SIMON SAID HE told Landrieu, "You don't really want me to tell them that," but that Landrieu repeated the statement.

Simon said he repeated his suggestion that Landrieu did not want him to do so but Landrieu again insisted he take the threat back to the board. So, said Simon, he did.

He said he told it to an executive committee meeting Nov. 21, then brought it up at a board meeting Nov. 25.

He said the board felt it was said in the heat of anger and wanted to give Landrieu a chance to retract it.

APPEARING BEFORE the board Nov. 26, Simon said, Landrieu did retract the statement and apologized. At that time, Simon said, Landrieu was questioned about the TAC land deal.

At that time, Simon said, the executive board took no action on the land deal charges but agreed to meet after the televised debate Dec. 8 to decide whether any statement would be necessary.

Simon said his feeling was that no statement would be made unless the crime commission's name was drawn into the discussion during the televised debate. The meeting was held at 10 a. m. Dec. 9 and the executive committee felt it necessary to issue the statement.

SIMON SAID HE played no part in drawing up the MCC statement signed by Dr. J. D. Grey, which appeared in this morning's issue of The Times-Picayune in answer to yesterday's editorial in that newspaper.

He said that, as a crime commission official, he did read the statement before it was released.

Landrieu stated that Aaron Kohn has consistently used

his (Landrieu's) name before groups of people in connection with rackets.

THIS, LANDRIEU said, came in spite of Kohn's written and oral statements to him that he was satisfied with Landrieu's defense of himself before the Crime Commission.

After the MCC's conflict of interest charge, said Landrieu, he appeared before the director in September, 1967, and challenged Kohn "to point out one wrongdoing I had committed in any part of my public, private or professional life."

Kohn, said Landrieu, "then asked me if I had voted on any issue in which TAC Amusement Co. had an interest." Landrieu said he responded by stating he voted on one case in which a music box violation was involved but TAC's involvement in the matter was an indirect one.

AFTER REFUSING two of the MCC's subsequent suggested written apologies because he did not consider them strong enough, said Landrieu, the third was agreed on. "I said I would not accept it unless Mr. Kohn personally stated that he agreed to that retraction," said Landrieu.

Landrieu said he finally asked Kohn, "Are you satisfied with the (MCC) statement as it is?" and Kohn replied that he, in Landrieu's words, "was perfectly satisfied and we shook hands on the matter."

On the matter of the Crime Commission's allegations that Landrieu threatened the organization and its managing director, Landrieu recounted the events as follows:

During the course of the campaign, Landrieu received reports that Kohn was renewing his attacks on the candidate's association with TAC Amusement.

LANDRIEU, SEVERAL weeks ago, had a private conversation with Simon, an MCC board member, in which Simon asked Landrieu if he would address the chamber two weeks after the election should he win.

Landrieu responded to Simon by saying many of the chamber's officials were actively working for his opponent, James E. Fitzmorris Jr.

Simon then said the chamber was "nonpartisan" in the election, although he himself was privately supporting Fitzmorris.

**LANDRIEU TOLD** Simon he had repeatedly asked him to "please prevent Aaron Kohn from trying to connect me with the mobsters." He added to Simon, "If he (Kohn) mentions my name again like that, I'll destroy him." Simon said Landrieu also told him that, if Kohn's actions were not stopped, "I will spend my next four years in office trying to destroy the Crime Commission."

Today, Landrieu stressed he personally apologized to Kohn, the members of the Crime Commission and everyone concerned in the matter of his statements about the Crime Commission which, he said, were made in anger.

"I have no recollection of ever having made the statement about killing Kohn," Landrieu stated today. "I never said, 'Yes, go tell Aaron Kohn I'm going to kill him.'"

**LANDRIEU ALSO** said he told Kohn previously: "You will never make me lie, nor will you make me run away from anything."

Landrieu said that in his September, 1967, meetings with the Crime Commission, he did not mention he owned property in connection with TAC officials.

"When I went before the body the first time," said Landrieu, "no one asked me if I owned land in connection with TAC. And I did not make a total and complete disclosure of everything in my life on the basis of one question from Aaron Kohn."

**LANDRIEU ASSERTED** he has followed MCC "guidelines" by "recusing myself whenever TAC had anything to do with bar permits or any other matter."

When the city ordinance to impose the amusement tax came up, said Landrieu, he asked for and received an opinion from Eugene L. Salatiel, an assistant city attorney, that his voting on the ordinance would not represent a conflict of interest and he voted for the tax.

Landrieu said he has stated publicly and in writing that he will resign his membership in the law firm of Landrieu, Calogero and Kronlage if elected mayor. Kohn asked him his position on his con-

nection, should he be elected, said Landrieu.

**ACCORDING TO** Landrieu, Kohn subsequently claimed before the MCC that Landrieu told him he would resign from the law firm at the time he announced his candidacy. Landrieu denied this today.

Landrieu stated that, while a state representative from the 12th Ward, he did, as the MCC stated today, defend TAC in criminal courts and performed other duties in a lawyer-client relationship. However, Landrieu said, many other lawyers in the state Legislature perform the same professional duties for business firms while voting on general legislation, as he has done with no reservations about the honesty of doing so.

**LANDRIEU POINTED OUT** that he was not the first person in Monday night's television debate between him and Fitzmorris to use the Metropolitan Crime Commission's name. (The MCC stated Wednesday it was injecting itself into this matter because it was concerned about statements made during the debate.)

Fitzmorris, Landrieu pointed out, was the first to mention the Crime Commission by name.

Landrieu asserted that of the Crime Commission's 17 members, eight are doing or have done business with TAC Amusement.

Dr. Grey said he first became aware of Landrieu's statements against Kohn and the MCC when Simon told the executive committee of the MCC on Nov. 21 that Landrieu had said:

"IF AARON KOHN doesn't stop referring to my relationship with TAC, I'm going to kill him and, if elected, will dedicate the first four years of my administration to destroying the Metropolitan Crime Commission."

Dr. Grey said Simon related the same statement on three different occasions to the MCC—at the executive committee meeting, at a general membership meeting

and at a meeting of the MCC board with Landrieu.

"I didn't think that Moon meant he would go get a gun and shoot Aaron Kohn," Dr. Grey said. "I recognized that the remarks were made in a moment of anger."

**DR. GREY SAID** a transcript of the MCC board meeting with Landrieu would show that Landrieu first denied having said he would kill Kohn.

"However, Joe Simon reminded Moon he had made the statement and he had told Mr. Simon to bring the message to the Crime Commission," Dr. Grey said.

Dr. Grey said the letter from the MCC to The Times-Picayune was drafted by Kohn and a public relations man.

**DR. GREY SAID** the MCC "was drawn into a public controversy at this date so close to the election with great reluctance. We are proud of our position as a non-partisan, independent group."

"We acted because we felt our apology of 1967 was being used as though it were a complete exoneration of Mr. Landrieu when in fact it was not."

"We would not have acted at all if Mr. Landrieu had not represented in the television debate on Dec. 6 that he had been exonerated by the MCC."

"I **DEEPLY RESENT** the implication that we are involved in politics. I regard the role I am playing as a civic duty—someone must take the role of a watchdog and speak out when it becomes necessary."

Dr. Grey said the "compelling factor" for him was Landrieu's alleged connections with pinball machine gambling.

"It has been shown that \$10 to \$20 million annually is diverted from legitimate enterprises to pinball machine gambling and it is a matter too important for us to remain silent about," Dr. Grey said.

"Go see Joe Simon," Kohn said when a reporter asked him this morning about the matter.

"It was through him that Mr. Landrieu's message was related."

Kohn said that he had a dispute with Landrieu in 1967 when he called in reporters on a story regarding Landrieu's association with TAC Amusement Co.

"I thought there was an injustice and when Mr. Landrieu asked for a correction I made it."

"But let me say this: 'I am not a voter in New Orleans. I moved to Jefferson Parish two years ago. Never since I have been in New Orleans have I actively engaged

in politics, actually participated in anybody's campaign."

"This is one of the sacrifices you have to make as managing director of the Metropolitan Crime Commission."

"I **HAVE STRONG** beliefs that every individual in our system should carefully make selections of candidates for office . . . and do everything possible to help elect those whom they choose."

"If more individuals gave of their time and effort in political campaigns it would be less necessary for candidates to depend on financing from those who expect selfish favors in return."

"A part of the educational work of MCC is to stimulate more individuals to become interested in government and the political processes which give vitality to government."

"**HOWEVER, ANOTHER** part of our educational effort is to develop the information which makes it possible to assure that those selected for public office are not compromised in their performance of duty."

"I do not believe that Mr. Landrieu had the slightest intention to carry out this reported threat to kill me," Kohn said.

"But I must admit concern about placing great power within control of any individual who expresses anger in that manner."

"But I'd rather you go see Joe Simon."