

MOB CANDIDATE WILL BE NAMED, GOVERNOR VOWS

By BILL LYNCH (States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—Gov. John J. McKeithen declared that he will testify which gubernatorial candidate received backing from underworld figure Carlos Marcello. He made the comment as a legislative committee investigating the Mafia heard testimony from four lawmen discounting the extent of influence by organized crime in the state.

The legislative-citizens advisory committee launched public hearings into allegations by Life magazine of organized crime influence on government in Louisiana.

New Orleans Police Chief

Joseph I. Giarrusso, Jefferson Parish Sheriff Alwynn J. Cronvich, Shreveport Public Safety Director George D'Artois and Lake Charles Police Chief Pete Stout were the first witnesses called by the committee.

THE NEXT committee hearing will be held June 10 in the capitol, Chairman Sen. Adrian G. Duplantier said.

McKeithen, a spectator during the entire three and half-hour hearing in a cramped committee room, commented after a committee member asked Sheriff Cronvich if he knew which candidate received help from Marcello. Cronvich said he didn't know.

Turning in his seat, McKeithen said, "When I testify, I'll tell them who received his backing in both campaigns. That's what

everyone wants to know and I'll tell them when I get under oath."

THE COMMITTEE, which was created by a legislative resolution, plans to hire a counsel and will ask former state Police Maj. Fred Roth to work as a staff member, Duplantier said. Roth headed a special unit of the state police investigating organized crime.

Questioning by the committee was done solely by the legislative members, with the citizens advisory group limited to submitting questions to the lawmakers. This is one of the points being contested in a bill seeking to create a statutory committee.

Sheriff Cronvich testified that there is a limited amount of organized crime in Jefferson Parish, which was cited in the Life magazine article, but not as extensive as some

think.

GIARRUSSO contended he had no evidence of organized crime being run by an overlord either in New Orleans or elsewhere in the state.

Both D'Artois and Stout maintained they also had no knowledge of organized crime in their areas or the rest of the state.

Cronvich denied the truth of some of the specific allegations made by Life magazine, many of which also have been contested by the governor's executive committee which probed the charges.

HE ACKNOWLEDGED that District Attorney Frank H. Langridge had conducted a grand jury investigation at which only Aaron Kohn, managing director of the New Orleans Metropolitan Crime Commission, testified, and

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then declared the parish free of organized crime. He said although he offered to have his deputies testify, none was called by the grand jury.

He said he felt the statement that Marcello was the unchallenged giant who controlled the state was an indictment of every citizen and he personally took exception that he is controlled.

"I agree that we do have organized crime, that it exists," Cronvich said. "But I wouldn't say it is of any great consequence."

He said, "We have sin all over the world. Sin exists and organized crime exists."

THE SIX-YEAR veteran of the sheriff's office said that he has had Marcello's Town and Country Motel under surveillance along with his home and other property.

He said he regarded Marcello as a leading organized crime figure because of an accumulation of things, such as his arrest in New York with other leading criminal figures.

Sen. Duplantier, who asked most of the questions, asked Cronvich if organized crime flourished in Jefferson Parish.

"Absolutely not," Cronvich answered.

IN RESPONSE to a question about influence on public officials, he said "certainly



SHERIFF ALWYNN J. CRONVICH

none in my area, but I can't speak for every official."

He said he had no evidence that other public officials are tied in with organized crime.

Life called Marcello the boss of the Mafia in Louisiana and said he was able to work

his will with public officials, including some in Jefferson Parish.

On the specific allegations, Cronvich said a private road cited in the Life article was accepted by the parish in 1943, which was before Marcello purchased the Churchill Farms property to which it leads.

A ROAD grader which Life said was owned by the parish and stayed camped on Marcello property, Cronvich said, appeared to be a stump removing machine that was owned by private parties.

The Bayou Signette

Pumping Station, a point listed in the governor's committee's report, does not drain Churchill Farms, he said. The station is part of Drainage District No. 7 which has a \$33,000 temporary pumping station.

The Life article said a million dollar pumping station drained the Marcello owned land.

Life said Marcello purchased the property for \$1 million and the public works projects have increased its value to \$60 million. Cronvich said he estimated it at \$16 million at a tax hearing, but an appraiser valued it at \$7.5 million for the 6,000 acres.

HE ALSO said it was his action that led to an increase in the assessment of the Marcello property by the Tax Commission before the Life article appeared last April.

Cronvich said that some members of the Marcello family are now engaged in legitimate businesses.

In the area of narcotics, he said it is an independent operation. He noted that one person had been arrested on narcotics charges and was later found dead in New York.

Sen. Duplantier made note that the body was found not far from the offices of Life magazine.

PROSTITUTION, Cronvich said, seemed to be on an individual basis. "Each person has his own stable," the sheriff said.

In the gambling field, he said the Jefferson Music Co. owned by the Marcellos has pinball machines which have been picked up when payoffs were charged.

He also said that he had no evidence that an employe of the district attorney had been employed by Marcello as Life claimed.

Cronvich said that one road, Lapalco Boulevard, may cross a small corner of Churchill Farms and that the Dixie Freeway is scheduled to go through the area.

HE CALLED for the adop-

tion of the State Crime Commission's legislation aimed at curbing organized crime and urged establishment of a central information agency for gathering data on criminal operations.

Giarrusso said he testified before a federal grand jury that organized crime does exist in the state but that he doesn't agree that it flourishes. He said he didn't agree that public officials are corrupt.

The New Orleans police chief, a veteran of 24 years' service, said there is no overlord or boss who controls the strings of crime in the city. Vice exists, he said, and in some instances, such as book-making, there is someone at the top controlling.

HE SAID he hopes the hearing develops some positive aspects such as remedial legislation to combat crime. He said reinforcement of the conspiracy laws, immunity for witnesses and wire tap legislation is needed.

Duplantier asked, "Do you have any information of any organized crime in the city or the state that involved public officials?"

"No, sir, I don't," Giarrusso responded.

He added that it wouldn't be fair to make a statement about other areas because he didn't want to hold himself out as an expert on organized crime.

Lake Charles Police Chief Stout testified only briefly and noted there had been considerable organized crime in his area years ago, but knew of none now.

ADJUTANT GENERAL David Wade, a future witness for the committee, asked that he not be called for the June 10 hearing because he did not plan to be present.

Wade was one of the first ones discussed by the committee as a potential witness because of his tenure as public safety director. The adjutant general established a special unit of the state police to combat organized crime.

McKeithen said he was "disappointed" at the announcement by Sen. Duplantier that the Mafia probe panel would not meet again until June 10. "I am anxious to get the Life magazine people up here," McKeithen said. "I hear they are prepared to back up their story."

THE GOVERNOR said he did not think his \$10 million libel suit against Life should preclude David L. Chandler, author of the Life article, from testifying before the committee.

"If he were being charged in a criminal matter it might make a difference but he isn't even being sued", McKeithen said. "David Chandler is not a litigant."