

THE STATES-ITEM

WALTER G. COWAN
Editor

CHARLES A. FERGUSON
Associate Editor

ASHTON PHELPS, *President and Publisher*

The States-Item prints the news impartially. It supports what it believes to be right. It opposes what it believes to be wrong, without regard to party politics.

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Pinball charges

Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, a police investigator assigned to his office and the commander of the New Orleans Police Department's Vice Squad have been charged by the federal government with accepting bribes over a long period of time to protect the operators of gambling-type pinball machines.

Seven other persons also have been charged in connection with the case, and U.S. Atty. Gerald J. Gallinghouse says more are to follow.

The charges are shocking. To prove them true is to prove that the disease of corruption has worked its way deep into the marrow of our system of government.

We do not intend to judge the government's case against the public officials and the others who allegedly represented the pinball operators in the bribery transactions.

This is the function of the court. The U.S. Justice Department will have ample opportunity to prove its charges.

The federal government's 113-page affidavit which accompanies the charges against Mr. Garrison and the others includes some references to proposed legislative action concerning pinball machines.

The affidavit includes a conversation between Mr. Garrison and Pershing Gervais, described as a go-between in the transactions involving the pinball interests and the district attorney. Mr. Gervais

allegedly recorded the conversation for the Justice Department. The conversation concerns legislators the pinball interests said they could "deliver."

Again, we do not intend to pass judgment on the allegations contained in the affidavit. We would make the following observations, however:

Attempts were made during both the 1970 and the 1971 legislative sessions to outlaw gambling-type pinball machines with "knock-off" devices. The legislation was beaten in both sessions.

In 1970, the bill was sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Criminal Justice, a powerful endorsement in itself, and had the backing of a wide range of organizations concerned with corruption in government.

The legislation, which would have allowed police to destroy pinball machines with knock-off devices, was passed by the Senate, but failed in the House.

This year's defeat came after payoff pinball opponents tacked an anti-pinball amendment onto an appropriations bill. The bill was made unacceptable to most legislators, however, when another amendment outlawing horse race betting was added. The final product died in a legislative conference committee.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"This is just the beginning of law-enforcement action following a comprehensive investigation into illegal operations of pinball machines."



—U.S. Atty. Gerald J. Gallinghouse, on the arrests of Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and others on bribery and other charges.