

Gervais Asks Immunity as Bribe Witness

A one-time government informer says he will testify at length about an alleged Mafia bribe offer as soon as he is guaranteed immunity from state and federal prosecution.

Pershing O. Gervais was convicted of contempt of court yesterday when he refused to testify before a Jefferson Parish grand jury probing allegations of bribery involving rackets boss Carlos Marcello.

Gervais was one of four witnesses called to testify yesterday as investigations opened into charges that a \$5,000 bribe was paid former Judge Malcolm V. O'Hara by Marcello.

Gervais is a former chief investigator for Orleans Dist. Atty Jim Garrison. He later worked for the federal government in its case involving alleged bribery payments to Garrison to protect pinball machine interests.

The Jefferson probe grew out of another investigation by the Orleans Parish grand jury. That body is investigating charges that Criminal District Court Judge Jerome Winsberg offered Gervais a bribe to influence the outcome of three cases. The indictment said the offers came when Winsberg was still a private attorney.

Winsberg yesterday attacked the grand jury system, saying it should be abolished because it impairs the rights of citizens.

Winsberg also said that he is innocent and has no intention of stepping down from the bench until the investigation is concluded.

"Not only my rights, but everybody's rights are impaired by the grand jury system, and it ought to be abolished," Winsberg said.

Judgeship Race Quit By Panzeca

Salvatore Panzeca, candidate for Criminal District Court judge, announced yesterday he will withdraw from the race because of the odds against his election Sept. 30 as the Democratic nominee.

"An intensive analysis of the Aug. 19 election returns has convinced me that the odds against my waging a successful second primary effort are overwhelming," Panzeca said in a written statement.

The criminal attorney's withdrawal from the runoff clears the way for incumbent Judge Frank J. Shea's renomination to the judgeship of Section G of Criminal District Court.

Panzeca said he could no longer ask supporters to devote time and financial resources to a campaign that, statistics say, cannot be won.