STEP IS TAKEN TO CURB CRIME

La. Group Seeks to Form Citizens’ Committee

The Council of Professional and Trade Associations of Louisiana Inc. is seeking formation of a citizens’ committee whose objective would be to curb crime in the metropolitan area.

Council attorney Clyde de La Houssaye said that the move is in response to the increasing crime rate.

Within the past three months, four grocers have closed their businesses because of repeated robberies, said de La Houssaye, who also represents the New Orleans Retail Grocers Association.

De La Houssaye said the situation is such that operators of small businesses are “scared” and want to get out of business rather than face the prospect of being robbed at gunpoint and perhaps killed in the process.

De La Houssaye plans to be in Washington Friday to confer with Will Wilson, assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal division. The meeting is in connection with the “War on Crime” project of President Nixon, de La Houssaye said.

The proposed citizens’ committee, de La Houssaye explained, would be formed from the Council of Professional and Trade Associations, which is comprised of varied phases of the industry — retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, suppliers of the food, drug, building, bakery, beverage, restaurant, service stations, breweries and liquor houses.

The committee would have a four-fold purpose: (1) confer with state officials in connection with the formation of a professional parole board; (2) find the proper amount of money to pay such a parole board; (3) pending the formation of a new board, seek sufficient funds to employ parole officers to supervise those on parole or probation; and (4) seek the help of the churches in an endeavor to see if they can cooperate with a properly established parole board and officers to control the situation.

De La Houssaye contended that most crimes in New Orleans are being committed by parolees, or persons who are third, fourth, fifth and sometimes sixth offenders out on parole or pardoned.

De La Houssaye said the council, as far back as 1957, asked Gov. John J. McKelheny to appoint a parole board of “untouchables” composed of professional men in the fields of criminology, psychiatry, sociology and other related fields.

A year and a half has elapsed since the suggestion was made and Louisiana still does not have a truly professional parole board. The current parole board is even one member short since William A. Bess of Baton Rouge died, said de La Houssaye.

Formation of a citizens’ committee, he said, may bring about the goal of a professional board and, at the same time, help curb crime.

De La Houssaye has sent letters to all members of the council, asking for their support in forming such a committee.

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