

## Bi-Partisan Transit Committee Asked

A request to the mayor and the City Council to appoint a bi-partisan committee to draw up "workable proposals for the future operation of our public transportation system" was made Wednesday by the Republican Conference of New Orleans.

Michael F. Starr, chairman of the Republican Party's First Congressional District, said in a prepared statement that such a committee should have a report ready in time to be considered as part of the city's submission to the state legislature in the spring.

A major task of the committee, said Starr, would be to help rebuild public confidence in the transit system.

"The current strike is seriously undermining public confidence in that transit system at the very time when major economic changes are making it very clear that efficient, affordable and reliable public transportation is indispensable to the economic and social well being of the entire community," said Starr.

The highest priority should be a satisfactory solution to the strike in order to enable the community to function at all levels again, he said.

Starr pointed out that some other urban areas have never recovered from transit strikes, that businesses and jobs have left the cities.

"The need of city residents to earn a decent and dignified living continues, but is now handicapped by residual bitterness and an accelerated slump in commercial activity resulting from the strike," Starr said.

The only way to rebuild confidence in the transit system is to provide for a workable system sensitive to human needs and based on a sound financial base, he said. "Transit employees will look for an adequately funded transit system to protect their rights to a decent wage and future pension benefits."

Starr said central city areas

need capital investment to provide jobs and services, but capital will not be spent unless public access is guaranteed. Persons totally dependent on public transportation for their livelihoods need to know a strike will not occur again, he said.

The Republican Conference of New Orleans believes the future of the public transportation system will largely shape the future of the community, said Starr, and its members are willing to offer professional services to help in any way they can.

He said the creation of a bi-partisan committee "should in no way be interpreted as cause to delay the settlement of this agonizing strike still further."

## WORKERS LIKED LAYOFF AT FORD

PICO RIVERA, Calif. (AP) — Laid-off workers are back on the job this week at Ford's giant assembly plant east of Los Angeles — but many say they enjoyed the "vacation."

"I had a good time," said assembler John Lynch, catching his breath as he dashed out of the plant. "I rested quite a bit, did some reading and did a little traveling around."

For Lynch like others at the plant, two factors helped ease the pain. One is that the lay-off lasted only two weeks — although after this week they may be laid off again. The other is that most laid-off auto workers receive about 95 per cent of their regular pay; in addition to unemployment checks from the government, they also receive supplemental benefits funded by their employer.

The more than 1,400 workers at the Pico Rivera plant, which turns out Thunderbirds and full-size Fords, got an unexpectedly early callback thanks to improving car sales.

"It was kind of like a vacation," said burly Jerry Abbott just before he whizzed off the lot in his shiny blue camper truck.

Richard Weber, a rugged-looking father of four who assembles fenders, said he didn't like coming back. "I went fishing for a week and did a little work around the house."

A number of workers interviewed as they came off shift said they had worked hard for many years and had earned some extra time off.

Ernest Mansker — a Ford assembler for 25 years — said he welcomed the break "because all these years I only get maybe one week of vacation a year and this gives me a chance to do a little gardening and get my flowers started."

However, many of the workers feel the resumption is only temporary. Ford officials say they will decide on a week-to-week basis whether they can continue production.

But said one worker, "It's nothing to worry about, we get paid," referring to the 95 per cent pay benefits that run for up to one year for laid-off workers.

Not all those interviewed were upset about coming back to work.

"I got a lot of things done around the house, but it felt good to get back," admitted assembler Don Pederson. "You can only spend so much time around the house."

## JUDGE REJECTS KRAMER'S PLEA

Federal District Judge Alvin B. Rubin Wednesday turned down a motion by Oscar Kramer, former official of Family Health Foundation, seeking to suppress from his trial testimony he gave recently at the trial of FHF founder Dr. Joseph Beasley and others.

Kramer was a defendant with Beasley and others in a case in which the defendants were charged with defrauding the United States of \$650,000 and filing false claims with the government.

At that trial Kramer testified for Beasley and subsequently was granted a severance and is now scheduled to be tried March 3.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Don Richard said that he intends to introduce Kramer's testimony in which he exculpates Dr. Beasley at the March 3 trial.

Kramer claimed in his motion that, if his testimony in the previous trial is introduced, he will be denied his Fifth Amendment right against self incrimination.

Judge Rubin held that Kramer's decision to testify at the previous trial was a valid waiver of his Fifth Amendment right and the waiver was knowing and intelligent.

## Milton Prater Convicted of Distribution of Heroin

Milton Prater, described by New Orleans narcotics Det. Joseph Branham as one of the largest retail heroin dealers in the city, has been convicted of distribution of heroin.

The conviction, returned in Section D of Criminal District Court, carries a mandatory life sentence.

Prater, 40, of 735 Dupre St., was arrested last Nov. 1 after police said they observed him making a sale in the 3000 block of Gravier Street. The area had been under surveillance by police using a high-power telescope mounted on top of the New Orleans Police Department garage at 715 South Broad.

District Attorney Harry F. Connick said two other per-

sons involved in the \$60 transaction turned state's evidence and their testimony was instrumental in the case.

Prater's 13-year-old daughter was identified in the courtroom by police as a lookout for her father while the sale took place.

Assistant District Attorney Vincent C. Cuccia, who prosecuted the case before Judge Frank Marullo Jr., said Prater had 21 previous arrests and four convictions.

One conviction was for distribution of heroin, one for forgery and two for possession of heroin.

The eight-woman, four-man jury deliberated for only 12 minutes before returning the guilty verdict.



—AP Wirephoto.

HENRY FORD, the president of Ford Motor Company, testifies before the Joint Economic Committee Wednesday in Washington. Ford said the country is heading for economic disaster and efforts so far by the government to change the course have been unavailing.

## Election Bid Is Probable—McKeithen

By ED ANDERSON

Ex-Gov. John J. McKeithen told The Times-Picayune Wednesday he will probably seek the governorship again in this fall's election.

"I'm getting a lot of encouragement," the former two-term state chief said in an interview from his office in Columbia, La. He added he would make an official announcement of his plans "in early June."

"I may run for office," he said. When asked what job would interest him, he said, "To be governor; I've already been public service commissioner. . . ." Gov. Edwin Edwards has already announced he will seek re-election.

He also said in the interview that after an inspection tour of the Domes Stadium — one of his pet projects while he was governor — last December he "was convinced" the stadium would not be ready for use until sometime this fall.

When informed the \$163.5 million stadium would not reach substantial completion until Aug. 1 and final completion until the end of 1976, McKeithen said:

"After a tour three or four months ago, I felt then it would be lucky if the stadium was ready for the (1975) football season. . . ."

"I am not surprised it is taking much longer. . . I am disappointed like everyone else is. . . No one with the stadium told me" the facility

would not be ready for the delayed May opening date.

Just from observation, he said, "there was just so much work left" to be done in December.

McKeithen also said the contractors working on the mammoth stadium "should be held to the letter of the law regarding their contract. But the ex-governor added: "It is a unique building. . . It (the delay) is not something we should be alarmed over. . . ."

"I hope the people will be patient. . . there is no clap-trap involved. . . ."

Asked if he agreed with Dome Commission member Jefferson Parish President Tom Donelon's proposal over the weekend to file a \$5 million to \$10 million damage suit against dome prime con-

tractors Huber, Hunt Nichols and Blount Brothers for the delay in opening the stadium, McKeithen said:

"Anybody can file a suit; I would like to get the advice of our (the stadium commission) counsel. . . Tom Donelon is a patient man; he is disappointed like all of us. . . ."

Despite the delays, McKeithen said he is still "really fiercely proud of" the stadium. Referring to Edwards — and his apparent lukewarm support of the project — the ex-governor said, "I predict he will be the first one in line when they cut the ribbon. . . ."

"I am proud of that stadium," McKeithen said. "I died a dozen times and we brought it back to life. . . ."

He added that although

there have been numerous delays in the opening of the stadium, "no one can be faulted for it" although there are some who want to make political hay" out of the situation.

McKeithen said he was referring to state Sen. Nat Kiefer of New Orleans who chaired a legislative committee which probed the stadium costs and delays.

McKeithen said the Domes Stadium "has been a real political liability" to him for years because he supported it before it was popular.

He added the stadium "is going to be a plus for those" who stood by it, especially if it is open in time for the 1975 football season.

## Missing Persons Bureau Aim

VICKSBURG, Miss. (AP)—

A Vicksburg pathologist said Wednesday that the finding of two skeletons last week points up the need for a missing persons bureau in Mississippi.

Dr. Leo J. Scanlon said the lack of such a bureau delayed for several days the ruling that one of the skeletons was not that of Mrs. Ann Wilcox Dawson of Birmingham, Ala.

"Had we had a good central office for missing persons, we could have determined Mrs.

Dawson was not our victim by Saturday," Scanlon said.

The skeletons were found Friday and it was Tuesday before authorities ruled that one did not belong to Mrs. Dawson. The ruling was based on her dental records.

Scanlon said authorities Wednesday were awaiting dental records from Louisiana on a teenager and a woman in her 20s who have been missing since October.

"It would be good to know

if they were traveling together or if any other two girls of similar ages traveling together had been reported missing, but without a missing persons bureau, how can we tell?"

He said that if a person in a European country is missing more than a week his dental plates and X-rays are entered in police files and wired to other places whenever needed.

"Here we wait for them to come by mail or be delivered across states," Scanlon said.

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