

# KNAPP PANEL TOLD OF INQUIRY DELAY

Inspector Testifies 8 Months  
Went By Before the Police  
Acted on Bronx Graft

By DAVID BURNHAM

A New York police inspector testified yesterday that he had passed on reports of widespread corruption to the second-highest official in the Police Department eight months before an investigation was begun.

The testimony of the inspector, Cornelius J. Behan, came during the second day of the Knapp Commission's cur-

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*Excerpts from the testimony  
are printed on Page 58.*

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rent series of public hearings into the extent of police corruption and the alleged failure of high officials in the Lindsay administration and the Police Department to act on specific charges of grafting.

Inspector Behan's recital corroborated in large part the testimony of Detective Frank Serpico, who told the commission on Tuesday that it was his understanding that his reports of widespread corruption among Bronx policemen reached First Deputy Police Commissioner John F. Walsh in February, 1967.

It was not until October of that year, the commission heard yesterday, that two police officials learned of Detective Ser-

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# Knapp Hearing Told of 8-Month Delay Before Police Began an Investigation of Corruption in Bronx

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pico's allegations and began investigating them. The two officials, who were then assigned to the Bronx, were on the witness stand yesterday.

Detective Serpico also said that by Memorial Day of 1967, he had given similar detailed information of police corruption to Jay Kriegel, a close associate and adviser of Mayor Lindsay, and to Arnold G. Fraiman, then City Investigation Commissioner and now a State Supreme Court justice. In neither case was there any apparent result, the detective testified.

Inspector Behan, a thin faced, gray-haired man wearing a gray flannel suit, blue shirt and checked tie, was the second witness in the commission's second series of hearings.

During the first set of hearings, which ran for nine days ending Oct. 29, the commission heard testimony from both policemen and civilians that there were widespread payoffs by gamblers, narcotics dealers, building contractors, tow-truck operators, restaurateurs and others.

## 'Corrupt System' Feared

Inspector Behan recalled that he had known Detective Serpico since the early nineteen-sixties but that sometime in late 1966—when they both were attending John Jay College—the detective had told him "he felt he was involved in a corrupt system and that he, as a patrolman, had difficulty operating in it."

Occasionally putting on heavy black-rimmed glasses to refer to notes he had kept on his discussions with the detective, Inspector Behan said that at first he had disagreed with Detective Serpico's analysis of widespread corruption.

The inspector said he had advised the detective that if the problem was as serious as he was suggesting, he had an obligation to step forward and report the violators either to his immediate commanders or the headquarters unit assigned to combat corruption.

"But he indicated that he wasn't prepared to accept these alternatives at this time," Inspector Behan said. "I know he felt that he would put himself in jeopardy if he pursued those tactics. He was an uncomfortable person in his role at this time."

Shortly thereafter, in February of 1967, Inspector Behan said that he and Detective Serpico had another conversation in which the policeman indicated "he would be willing to investigate corruption if he were assigned to a squad that was dedicated to that purpose."

With the detective's approval, the inspector then said he had a conversation with First Deputy Commissioner Walsh, the second highest man in the department and the official with the primary responsibility for combatting corruption.

"I explained to him what Serpico had said, that there was corruption in the Seventh Division, and that he was willing to investigate it if he were assigned to the central headquarters squad investigating

corruption," Inspector Behan testified.

"And the deputy commissioner was very happy to hear that a man of integrity had surfaced. He said, however, that he did not think it advisable to transfer him, that he preferred to leave him in field assignment, where he could remain aloof from corruption and active in anti-corruption investigations."

Inspector Behan, who is 47 and entered the Police Department in 1946, said he assumed that the detective had approached him partly because of their long friendship and partly because of his role in organizing weekend retreats, where

policemen go into monasteries for prayer, meditation and discussion.

Inspector Behan said he then had another meeting with Detective Serpico, at which he was given further details of corruption among plainclothes policemen assigned to enforce gambling laws in the Bronx. He relayed the information to Commissioner Walsh, the inspector testified.

After describing another meeting at which Detective Serpico provided further details of how the police corruption was organized, the commission chairman, Whitman Knapp, asked the inspector whether he still felt the detective was ex-

aggerating.

"No," the witness answered. "I thought he had been quite specific and that no man would say these things if he didn't feel they were true, and I did not feel he was exaggerating at this point."

## Investigation by Supervisor

Noting that he again had relayed the corruption allegations to Commissioner Walsh, the inspector testified that a few months later—in October, 1967—Detective Serpico called him in a highly agitated state because there still had been no investigation.

Inspector Behan said it was this point that Detective Serpico

said he would be willing to speak with his immediate supervisor—Inspector Phillip Sheridan. Inspector Behan testified that he immediately informed Inspector Sheridan, who then began an investigation.

The commission then called to the stand Inspector Sheridan, now retired and teaching typing in a high school, and Deputy Chief Inspector Jules Sachson, then in charge of plainclothes policemen in the Bronx and now commander of the Narcotics Division.

As a result of their investigation, Chief Sachson testified, 10 policemen eventually were indicted by either state or Federal prosecutors and 11 more

were charged with violating Police Department rules.

The last witness to testify before the commission yesterday was Bronx District Attorney Burton B. Roberts, who said that without the information provided by Detective Serpico, "there would have been no police investigation."

## 'Traumatic' Effect Noted

"Without Serpico, there would have been no grand jury investigation," he added.

Mr. Roberts said the investigations growing from Detective Serpico's information had "traumatized the Police Department" and had caused the District Attorneys to start paying more

attention to police corruption, and "in that respect, he deserves a great deal of credit."

Mr. Roberts said that he had written to both Mayor Lindsay and former Police Commissioner Howard R. Leary recommending that Detective Serpico, then a patrolman, be promoted, but that it was not until after Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy was appointed that this recommendation was acted on.

The District Attorney also said Mayor Lindsay "was truly concerned and has been concerned about matters of dealing with police corruption, and in my length of time in law enforcement I have never seen

any Mayor who was that concerned, who wished to do something about it."

At the end of yesterday's hearings, Chairman Knapp announced that the hearings, which are being held in the Chamber of Commerce Building at 65 Liberty Street, would be extended an additional day and would end Monday rather than Friday, as formerly planned.

Under the new schedule, former Commissioner Walsh and Personnel Chief Joseph McGovern will testify today, Sgt. David Durk and Justice Fraiman on Friday and Mr. Kriegel and Mr. Leary on Monday.