

Excerpts From Comment By Mayor on Knapp Unit

Following are excerpts from the portion of Mayor Lindsay's news conference yesterday that dealt with the public hearings of the Knapp Commission into allegations of police corruption:

Q. You know Memorial Day, 1967, your Investigation Commissioner, Mr. Fraiman, received evidence of specific charges of corruption and then in the testimony last week he said that he didn't take them seriously.

A. Well you know it has to be remembered that in the period of 1967 and 1968 there was a great deal of activity in this town on the subject of police corruption.

Now if there are any omissions in that period of time by ranking police officials in any specific case, I think it's helpful to have them clarified so that when the Knapp Commission comes down with recommendations if there are any gaps in the procedures by which these things are brought to light and prosecuted they will be closed.

Q. Mr. Mayor, did you ever hear from Jay Kriegel that when Sergeant Durk and Detective Serpico came to him that police officials were not investigating complaints of corruption. Did Jay Kriegel ever tell you that Durk and Serpico feared that their complaints were not being investigated by high-placed officials?

A. No, sir, he did not.

The ground rules that were given to me were that I could meet with them only in secret neither at Gracie Mansion nor at City Hall, but in some secret place, that I could not tell my Police Commissioner about it or any police official, nor could I report to them later.

I told Mr. Kriegel that I could not under any circumstances as Mayor accept those ground rules. Police Commissioner Leary had been on board for a year and three months at this point. It would have undermined him totally. It would have been a signal to him of no-confidence and if I'd been a Police Commissioner under those circumstances I expect I would have handed in my resignation.

Full Discussions Cited

Q. I just want to establish, so that we can keep the continuity here, that the last thing we heard was from former Police Commissioner Leary saying that he would have acted on corruption if you, sir, had passed it on to him. Did you have specific information about a corruption situation that you could have passed on to former Commissioner Leary?

A. No, sir. There was no suggestion of corruption going on in the Police Department ever made to me that was not discussed with the Police Commissioner and with ranking officials.

And I tell you, I made it very clear to Jay Kriegel and everyone else, that I wanted specifics at all times, but if I ever had them that the Police Commissioner was going to be immediately appraised and I also let it be known that if any officer wanted to meet with me or anything else, the Police Commissioner was going to be there. Because's that's his job.

Q. Does that still hold?

A. And that still is true.

Q. Did Leary's resignation have anything to do with the failure to do a better job in investigating this?

A. No, it did not.

Q. Mr. Lindsay, John Walsh did not respond to a request for an investigation from these men—that's the testimony. The Commissioner of Investigation did not respond to the request for an investigation. That's the testimony. Jay Kriegel did not respond. Who's responsible for this failure?

Who Is to Blame?

A. I think it has to be made clear, as I said a moment ago, that first of all, at that time, no one had any knowledge that John Walsh was not responding, if he was not.

Q. Mr. Mayor, somewhere, somebody has to share some blame for the long delay and the continuing frustration that Serpico and Durk went

through. Someone has to be responsible. Who is it?

A. Well I think that the Knapp Commission undoubtedly will focus again on the question as to the chain of command in the Police Department and how these things are handled. Now I say that without faulting John Walsh or Howard Leary. And I do think that if in the structure there is the possibility for a gap of that kind for a police officer to be frustrated in his attempt to try to make known his specific complaint, if there is any frustration on that, I think we have to address ourselves to that.

Q. Have you scolded Jay Kriegel for not telling you the specifics and blowing the cover of Durk?

A. I said if Jay Kriegel is honor-bound to an old friend of his who was talking to him as a friend and not as a police officer, was talking to him because of a personal relationship and had committed Jay Kriegel as I am now told to an honor-bound situation he chose to respect that.

Q. Are you now encouraging police officers to come forward and talk with your present City Investigation Commissioner Ruskin and would they have assurance of all confidence if they did?

A. That power is now established.

Q. If Jay Kriegel knew of alleged very serious things, but because of a personal friendship, didn't tell you, isn't that wrong?

A. He did tell me, He told me that there was a general problem.

Q. Mr. Mayor, did your Investigation Commissioner Arnold Fraiman have a legal obligation to act on the information?

A. No, sir, the Commissioner of Investigation, by the whole practice of the history of the City of New York, have been traditionally excluded from police matters. Other uniformed services—fire, sanitation—yes. But not in police. And it was our—it was my goal to change that and we did.

Q. Mr. Mayor, should there be a grand jury investigation into this whole thing?

A. There have been. There are five ongoing grand jury investigations. The District Attorneys have been vigilant on this subject. Roberts and I have discussed this at length and it seems to me that there's never a moment that he's not involved himself in the question of allegations of police corruption.

Q. But Mr. Mayor, isn't the fact that the first deputy police commissioner dropped the ball and forgot about it, the Investigation Commissioner said, "I couldn't take it seriously," in effect, and the Police Commissioner said he didn't know anything about it."

A. All the more reason why the Knapp Commission can be helpful in giving us their recommendations on any changes in the information and procedure structure to avoid any such stuff in the future.

A Pattern of Inaction

Q. Then there was a pattern of inaction?

A. I think it appears, on the basis of these hearings, that there was period of time there when the ball was dropped in the Police Department. And I don't—and it was not done, obviously, by any venality, by Commissioner Walsh. He was a superb police officer. Something went wrong — bureaucracy or something else—and that obviously has to be changed.

Q. Mr. Mayor, has your re-election campaign, or other political considerations, slowed down the investigations of police corruption?

A. Absolutely not.

Q. Councilman Troy has asked that the District Attorney investigate . . .

A. I must say right now that I'm not going to comment on anything that has to do with Mr. Troy.