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Hanna named special prosecutor; state police to look for corruption

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and JOHN NORBERG
Staff Writers

George L. Hanna, former Tippecanoe County prosecutor, today was named by the three county judges to the post of special prosecutor to investigate allegations of widespread "corruption in the criminal justice system."

He was named to the special post when Prosecutor James Kizer removed himself from the case, stating the investigation had to be done by someone other than a public official.

Circuit Court Judge Warren B. Thompson and Superior Court Judges Robert F. Munro and Jack A. King today sent a letter to Indiana State Police Supt. Robert DeBard, notifying him of the appointment of a special prosecutor and asking state police to "make a full and complete investigation into the allegations that have been made."

Capt. James Kleiman of the state police headquarters investigative division, will head the police investigation in Lafayette, DeBard said today.

"We'll be moving in very shortly," DeBard said. "We'll assign other officers as necessary, some local, some from other parts of the state."

In the letter, the judges said they offered the full assistance of the special prosecutor and a grand jury "in order that evidence will be gathered and charges filed if your investigation should reveal that any



GEORGE L. HANNA
... prosecutor here 1953-66

criminal offense has been committed."

"We have no specific information to support or refute any of these allegations," the judges said in the letter. "But it is our belief that the interests of justice require that these allegations be made the subject of a full investigation by the Indiana State Police with the assistance of a special prosecutor for the purpose of determining whether indictments should be returned."

Charges of corruption have been leveled by some police officers and fired chief deputy prosecutor John Dibble for the past 10 days. Monday, Dibble called for a special outside investigation which he said "must in my opinion be accompanied by ap-

pointment of a special prosecutor and the convening of a special grand jury." Dibble has made no specific charges, and said today he would "absolutely" cooperate with the special investigation and prosecutor.

Hanna, a Republican who served as prosecutor from 1959 to 1966, said the investigation will probably take four weeks to complete, after which he will present the findings to a grand jury.

He said all records of the investigation will be kept at the Indiana State Police Post and his offices probably will be there.

"When the investigation is complete I shall ask the court to call the grand jury to review the results of the investigation and to determine whether or not indictments should be returned," Hanna said. "This puts the final determination as to whether or not prosecution should be brought in the hands of the citizens of this community."

"If the citizens of the grand jury determine that prosecution should be instituted," Hanna said, "then I shall prosecute to the full extent of the law . . . There will be no plea-bargaining on any person indicted as a result of this investigation."

Hanna said he was calling a meeting of all police agencies at 7 a.m. Thursday to outline the procedures he will follow. He was expected to be formally sworn in by the three judges late this afternoon. The action has been under consideration for several days.

Kizer, a Democrat, today said he requested an investigation as well as a special prosecutor after talking with the judges, DeBard and an aide in the office of Gov. Otis R. Bowen.

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Kizer said he gave complete statements to DeBard and the governor's aide, James T. Smith, concerning the reasons for his dismissal of Dibble, whose firing sparked the allegations of corruption.

Dibble has charged political influence was involved in his dismissal, but Kizer has denied those charges and had previously said he would welcome a full and complete investigation.

Kizer said that because no individuals have been named in allegations of corruption, all elected officials feel they are suspect.

"I think that because of the sweeping accusations that have been made, all the public officials in this community, including the judges, feel they are holding their jobs under a cloud," Kizer said today. "At this point," he said, "the public wants to know what these allegations are about and you've got to have someone who is not a public official to serve as special prosecutor."

A motion filed in court today by the three judges and signed by Ki-

zer states: "It appears to the court that certain allegations have been publicly made concerning possible criminal conduct by public officials and concerning the possible commission of crimes which have not been properly investigated or prosecuted, and that further allegations have been publicly made that the said prosecuting attorney has been influenced in the conduct of his office by political considerations."

"It further appears to the court that the interests of justice require that said allegations be made the subject of police and grand jury investigation."

Lafayette Mayor James Riehle, who has been criticized for not taking action himself, said he was pleased with the action being taken today.

"That's fine," Riehle said. "It gets it (charges of corruption) into the proper channels. The decision of the judges to gather and receive the testimony under oath is the way it should be."

Dibble said today he had no prior knowledge of what the judges were planning to do. He said he had not released details of information he says he has because "they're not mine to give; they were given to me in confidence. I can only ask them

to go to the prosecutor and give what they know."

A small group of people, who have refused to identify themselves, have been passing out "Re-hire Dibble" bumper stickers. An intermediary for the group said they were afraid to identify themselves because they had received threats. He asked today if he had been threatened. Dibble said, "No comment."

Hanna said he would be in charge of the entire investigation, but that he, at this time, had no knowledge "as to any criminal activity" in Tippecanoe County.

The as yet unspecified salary for the special prosecutor will come from the county's general fund.

"I appreciate the confidence which the judges have expressed in me and I will accept this responsibility," Hanna said.

Hanna, 43, is a graduate of Purdue University and the Indiana University School of Law. He served as deputy prosecutor here from 1954 to 1959. He also served as Lafayette School Board attorney from 1969 to 1974, and is an assistant professor in the Krannert School of Industrial Management. He practices general law.

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