

SEN. GEORGE KUHN: LAWS FOR 'CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY'

Even before the Detroit riot of late July, there had been growing concern, not only in the metropolitan area but across the state and nation, about the soaring crime rate.

The State Senate, some months ago, organized a crime investigating committee, and one of the men appointed to this unit was Sen. George Kuhn, R-West Bloomfield. Kuhn represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Livonia, Plymouth and Farmington.

Kuhn, as a Ford Motor Co. executive and a Naval Reserve officer, believes in pinning down responsibility when a situation goes sour, and he's planning to ask some tough questions.

One of the men he seems particularly eager to quiz is Detroit's Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, with whom he (Kuhn) had a long battle over the non-resident feature of Detroit's income tax.

We asked Sen. Kuhn about the investigation, what he expects to find, what his theories of the crime problem are. Here are the questions and his answers:

Police Chiefs

QUESTION: You've been appointed to a State Senate Investigating Committee on Crime, headed by Sen. James Fleming of Jackson. What is your committee's assignment?

KUHN: "Well, the committee's original assignment was to study the crime in Michigan—the rate of which has been accelerating in the last two years quite significantly.

"For another reason, our Senate Judiciary Committee has been unable to report out satisfactory anti-crime legislation. "Secondly, because of the recent Detroit riots, our assignment has been expanded to include the riot situation.

"This crime study is not confined to the Detroit metropolitan area. Flint, Jackson, Grand Rapids, Muskegon and all parts of the state are being considered."

QUESTION: The Legislature is going to have a session in October. Will the crime problem be brought up then?

KUHN: "Very regrettably, the governor, at this point in time, has omitted the anti-crime or riot legislation as an item on the agenda.

"I personally am sending him a letter indicating in my humble judgment that this is of the highest priority and should be the No. 1 item on the agenda this October.

"I do not think we can talk about any other matters until we have law and order in the streets."

QUESTION: In the crime investigation, your committee will go into several cities. Whom will you ask to testify? And what



are you going to ask them?

KUHN: "In a preliminary organizational meeting before the hearings, we've already decided to call in all the past state police commissioners, all the past Detroit police commissioners—Herbert Hart, George Piggus, Don Leonard, George Edwards, who's now a federal judge, and of course current Commissioner Ray Girardin.

"It is our desire to learn as much as possible about the background of the crime issue over the last 10 to 15 years and get the current status.

"Besides these commissioners of police, we've asked certain judges to take part; we've asked Mayor Cavanagh to take part and other political leaders who have got knowledge or close association with this crime issue."

QUESTION: Do you think you'll get a

Mayor's Policies

QUESTION: After the riot, Mayor Cavanagh suggested that the Congress might be to blame for not passing enough social legislation. . . What's your view?

KUHN: "Personally, I hate to get into this particular controversy, because I happen to be one that shares the view that possibly all this money out of Washington—nearly \$200 million so far—of that is treating Detroit unfairly, I think they rate as the top city in the country as far as congressional help and money.

"But despite this money, I don't think it's proved to be successful. I think we must look at other causes or reasons."

"I for one have a number of questions to ask Cavanagh on his so-called part in the last five years. . ."

QUESTION: What sorts of questions? KUHN: "This means we must address ourselves to what Detroit is attempting to do in terms of measuring the impact or results of what his political policies have been, to see whether or not they've been effective.

"Personally, I believe there's time for thorough analysis and re-evaluation of the entire picture. We need to do some new things and start a new approach. I think that the whole problem, in my judgment, is education and jobs—not necessarily money. Money can't solve all problems."

'A Breakdown'

QUESTION: Senator, why do you think there has been an increase in crime, not only nation-wide and in Michigan, but in cities, suburbs and everywhere else?

KUHN: "Generally speaking, I believe a lot of problems have started in the home. There's the lack of discipline and respect for parents, the lack of parents taking proper steps for the control of children. . . It's penetrated to the public streets.

"There's a great breakdown of law and order in the streets, possibly caused by policies in the political arena in terms of charges being watered down by police departments and the court treatment of criminals and judicial decisions coming from the highest courts in the land. . ."

QUESTION: Then you're suggesting that, in addition to new laws which the Senate Investigating Committee on Crime will consider, perhaps there could be better enforcement of existing laws?

KUHN: "That is correct. I think there's laziness in current enforcement of existing laws. More importantly, I think we need

to address ourselves to a whole new body of crime laws, particularly since the riots.

"We need strong deterrents to another holocaust such as we've just seen—where we've literally burned down a city, causing a billion dollars worth of damage.

"I'm concerned about a whole new body of laws called 'crimes against society.' "I think we all remember the Nuremberg trials in Germany where they tagged it 'crimes against humanity' in the sense of mass murders. . ."

"And I do believe we need some strict, tough legislation for looking, burning, attacking our police and firemen in the line of duty as they attempt to do a public service.

"I think they should be stiff in their penalties, maybe for 20 years minimum and up to life, depending on the severity of the crime.

"But we cannot tolerate insurrection on our city streets. We cannot tolerate civil unrest where they attack our police officers, our firemen, our National Guardsmen. I think this is a very serious matter, and we need a whole new body of laws to cope with severe crimes—not just assault and battery charges, not just a crime of disorder."

QUESTION: This new concept in riot legislation—how does this differ from the legislation we already have on the books?



KUHN: "I think the current legislation is weak and watered-down and ineffective in terms of dealing appropriately with crimes against society, such as looting and arson and insurrection, attack on public servants.

"Our new laws should be written to be a deterrent against crime with minimal sentences of 20 to 100 years, and treated as felonies instead of misdemeanors."

Stiff Sentences

QUESTION: Besides looking into the possibility of new laws, will the committee go into any other aspects of crime and riot control?

KUHN: "Well, as you know, there are studies and mock riot demonstrations taking place in Michigan.

"And there are new techniques, such as using spathic gas to disperse crowds. I think we want to be as humane as possible, but on the other hand we must maintain law and order in the streets as the first order of business."

QUESTION: Senator, you mentioned the Judiciary Committee earlier, and that some legislation has been bottled up. What's going on in the Judiciary Committee? What kind of legislation is being considered?

KUHN: "The Senate Judiciary Committee has been taking under advisement a series of anti-riot and crime bills, including a stop-and-frisk law, but it has not seen fit at this date to put the matters on the floor of the Senate for a vote."

QUESTION: Why not? KUHN: "Partly, to be honest about it, I'd say it's political—and a need for more urgency in this matter. I hope that we will, this fall, get the matter on the agenda so we can enact (for bills I have pending before the Judiciary Committee).

"One is on stop-and-frisk, which would allow police officers to stop persons suspected of carrying a dangerous or concealed weapon. . . I believe strongly we must disarm the people who are carrying dangerous weapons, especially those that are unauthorized.

"Then there's the matter of anti-riot legislation, which the governor did issue by proclamation during the recent riot. That is, the prohibiting of three or more persons from assembly in situations that would tend to be riotous, to discourage mob action and buildup of crowds.

"Then there's another bill, SB 186, that is a dangerous weapon act, making it unlawful to carry knives, razor blades or ice picks. . ."

"In Detroit alone, we had roughly a 60 per cent increase in murders in the last calendar year."



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