



The Clue that Trapped the Heirs of Huey Long

ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 7, 1939, a hot tip came in to the city desk of the New Orleans States, evening newspaper sister of the famous Times-Picayune.

When a truck drove up before a half-built house in the suburbs and began unloading window sash, the States' photographer was hiding behind a hedge. The picture he got touched off a string of giant firecrackers that blew hundreds of Louisiana politicians out of the public trough.

► For the license plate proved that the truck belonged to Louisiana State University—and the half-built house belonged to the wife of a colonel on the governor's staff. Just a drop in the bucket of graft that the political heirs of Huey Long had been passing around for years. But the first case that could be proved—libelproof, airtight.

That night 64-year-old Jim Crown, the States' fighting editor, sat down on his bed and sobbed—reaction from months without respite in the front-line editorial trenches. "At last we get a break!"

► With the fuse once lit, the firecrackers kept popping around the cowering Longsters. Three men committed suicide; more than 200 faced federal and state indictments. It had been a great spree, but thanks to the battling Picayune papers, it was all over.

They're in the great American tradition, the dignified old Times-Picayune and the rip-roaring, rough-and-tumble New Orleans States. They have a line behind them that reaches back to Ben Franklin and Sam Adams and Tom Paine.

When Jim Crown strides around his office, dictating editorials at the top of his leather lungs, Greeley and Dana keep step with him. Pulitzer and

Nast pound him on the back. And through him William Lloyd Garrison speaks again: "I am in earnest. I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch; and I will be heard!"

► Courage is probably, next to truth, the greatest quality that a newspaper can have. For the world abounds in forces, actions, events, and people before which neither man, nor newspaper, nor the Newsmagazine, can be coldly objective. Silence, indifference, genteel or amiable omissions are not true impartiality—they are just what the forces of corruption or stupidity want, the broth in which they thrive.

► TIME has never believed that icy indifference or "pure objectivity" is either possible or desirable in news reporting. Any colorful, humanized story contains something of the mental attitudes and judgments of the men who wrote and edited it.

But over and above this is the sense of heightened responsibility that characterizes these times, as it has other periods of crisis. These days are big with destiny for our country and the world. And the Newsmagazine in this era has a deep and peculiar responsibility. It is, in a sense, the national newspaper; it has the same obligation to all the people of the U.S. that the best dailies feel toward the people of their cities. That obligation means more than finding and condemning the things that are wrong. It also means finding and supporting the things that are right.

► It's not so easy as it sounds.

The world of right and wrong dresses in shades of gray. The pepper-and-salt of ordinary human nature... the protective coloration of the rascal... the unprepossessing garments that can hide a clean white motive.

► Studying that gray crowd-picture, penetrating its disguises, throwing a searchlight here and an X-ray there, is part of TIME's job. TIME queries its reporters and correspondents again and again: "What's behind this? Who's behind it? Give us the background." TIME listens to people—all kinds of people, with all kinds of causes and crusades—balances their ideas against events, against knowledge, horse sense, and plain old American morals.

And sometimes when every possible scrap of fact, every line of expert and inexpert opinion is on the table, TIME editors still miss the last train home, trying to decide what's right, who's right, and how to let the people know it.

► Judgments arrived at this way are not infallible, for nothing human is. But they are genuinely responsible. Essential to people who share TIME's attitudes—stimulating to people who don't. And backed by the courage of conviction.

This is one of a series of advertisements in which the Editors of TIME hope to give all the readers of this newspaper a clearer picture of the world of news-gathering, news-writing, and news-reading—and the part TIME plays in helping you to grasp, measure, and use the history of your lifetime as you live the story of your life.

