

New Investigation Division Created to Root Out Corruption

By Craig McGuire

Targeting corrupt public employees of New York City and State working in Brooklyn, Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes has created a Corruption Investigation Division.

Led by Deputy District Attorney Dennis Hawkins, the division, which sprang into action on November 1, 1993, is comprised of nine assistant district attorneys, six investigators, and one financial investigator.

"District Attorney Hynes felt resources should be directed to placing more emphasis on prosecuting public officials who act in an illegal manner," said Hawkins.

The former head of the Kings County Organized Crime Bureau, Hawkins said, "This is a small unit dedicated to investigating and prosecuting corrupt officials."

According to Hawkins, the division handles approximately 50 open cases at any given time, investigating allegations concerning employees ranging from police officers to sanitation workers.

"In mid-November, we successfully investigated allegations that led to the arrest of Brooklyn DOT Department of Transporta-

tion] employees," illustrated Hawkins, "who were responsible for paving roads, but were actually stealing equipment and hiring themselves out during working hours."

The workers, from a DOT yard in Flatlands, have since been indicted.

"Public servants have to decide whether they are going to serve the public or enrich themselves," said Hawkins. "For those who decide not to uphold their responsibilities and undermine the public trust, I'm going after them."

Hawkins says that while his office vigorously investigates and prosecutes, "It works both ways."

"There are a lot of allegations made falsely," explained Hawkins, "and we are responsible to investigate and exonerate the individual."

"For example, we recently investigated a drug dealer who claimed a police officer was selling him drugs and urging him to get involved in further illegal activity," said Hawkins. "Following an intensive investigation, we discovered that the dealer was making up the events, which resulted in his arrest."

"There are a lot of times when employees are faced with allegations based on

rumor or mistake," said Hawkins. "It is our responsibility to protect the good name of these public servants."

"We mostly concentrate on city employees, but if we are aware of state and federal charges, we will pursue them," remarked Hawkins.

Hawkins dismisses any concerns of bias tainting investigations of high level employees. "I am confident that the D.A. would support any investigation, wherever it may lead," he said.

Hawkins's unit is currently looking into allegations of illegal activity by an elementary school prin-

cipal in Brighton Beach.

Hawkins, who first began working under Hynes prosecuting Nursing Homes in 1978, said Hynes "has never reined in an investigation because of political considerations."

"While our division works with the internal affairs division and the vari-

ous inspector generals, people hear and see and know things," remarked Hawkins.

Hawkins urges anyone with information concerning corruption among any public employees to contact the Corruption Investigation Division at (718) 522-3270.