

Reopen Duncan quiz, Kelley asks

By Ronald Koziol
and Chuck Neubauer

A NEW DEMAND to reopen the stalled city council investigation into the activities of Jerome J. Robinson, Chicago's millionaire parking meter tycoon, was made Saturday by Ald. Clifford F. Kelley (30th).

"It's especially necessary now in light of disclosures this week that Robinson and his associates continue to contribute big to Mayor Byrne's fund-raising campaign," said Kelley. "It appears to be more than a coincidence that Robinson's companies continue to get favored treatment from the city."

The Tribune disclosed Tuesday that among the contributions to the mayor's McCormick Place fund-raiser last Oct. 23 was a \$2,000 gift from the Powers Label Co., a firm owned by Robinson. He is a close friend of the mayor's husband, Jay McMullen.

THE DONATION came at a time when the city had a lawsuit pending against Robinson's Duncan Traffic Equipment Co. The suit had challenged payment of \$275,000 to Duncan for inspecting parking meters when many were buried under snow during the

1979 blizzard.

Just four days after the dinner, the city settled the suit for \$2,000. A few weeks after that, the city agreed to pay Duncan \$28,500 for repairing parking meters damaged during the storm. The payment was approved by the Byrne administration although officials of Mayor Michael Bilandic's administration had turned down the claim, saying that damaged meters were covered in his contract with Duncan.

Mayor Byrne also received \$1,000 from the law firm which represents Robinson—Aaron, Aaron, Schimberg and Hess—and another \$1,250 from Robert Billings, an occasional public relations man for Robinson.

KELLEY SAID HE would meet with Ald. Wilson Frost (34th), chairman of the special city council committee, to discuss "getting the committee moving."

Frost, an ally of Mayor Byrne, told The Tribune on Feb. 2 that he would call a meeting of the committee for mid-February. Attempts to reach him for comment on the matter last week were unsuccessful.

Previously, Frost had expressed concern about the direction of the committee while a

federal investigation was in progress.

At that time, The Tribune had disclosed that the U.S. attorney's office had opened an investigation into Robinson's parking meter empire and his exclusive contracts with the city. Federal investigators already have met with Jerome Turben, the council committee's special counsel, and reportedly have sought city records dealing with the Robinson contracts.

THERE WERE also reports last week that Robinson had retained the services of a noted criminal attorney, who has practiced extensively in the federal courts and who has represented many prominent citizens in the past.

However, it was learned that the attorney has not yet decided to represent Robinson, who has been Chicago's parking meter man since the first of the city's nearly 25,000 parking meters were installed in 1922.

Through the years, Robinson's companies cornered the market on the city parking meter business. His firms now sell, inspect, repair, and collect money from all the city's meters.