

Partin Is Indicted On 5 U.S.

Counts

Baton Rouge labor figure Edward Grady Partin was indicted today by the federal grand jury in New Orleans on five conspiracy and extortion charges.

Partin was indicted along with one other individual and three corporations for criminal conspiracy to monopolize trade in concrete products and with extortion.

Conviction on the extortion charge carries a maximum 20-year jail term and \$10,000 fine. The conspiracy charge—a violation of the federal Sherman Antitrust Act—carries a \$50,000 fine for the corporations and the same fine with a one-year jail term for the individuals involved.

BOND WAS SET AT \$25,000 by Federal District Judge Herbert W. Christenberry and must be posted in Baton Rouge by July 18. Judge Christenberry set this figure at the request of U.S. Attorney Louis C. LaCour.

Indicted besides Partin were Ted F. Dunham of Baton Rouge, Dunham Concrete Products Inc., Louisiana Ready-Mix Co. Inc., and Anderson-Dunham Inc.

The indictment listed Dunham as an officer of the three firms, and Partin as business manager, secretary and treasurer of the General Truck Drivers, Warehousemen and Helpers Local No. 5. Partin was a key government witness at the trial of Teamster boss James Hoffa which resulted in the prison term Hoffa is now serving.

U.S. ATTY. GEN. John N. Mitchell announced the indictment in Washington at the time it was made public here. He said it charges the defendants and unnamed parties with conspiring since early 1966 to force industrial purchasers of concrete products to buy exclusively from Dunham companies, using strikes, work stoppages and property damage at construction sites.

The indictment also charges the defendants conspired to:

—Obstruct and delay construction projects which used competitors' concrete products.

—Supply truck drivers and



EDWARD GRADY PARTIN

equipment operators to concrete suppliers and at higher wage rates and upon less favorable terms than those extended to Dunham companies.

—Fix prices and prescribe areas of sale of concrete products.

The defendants also were charged with two counts of extortion under the labor racketeering provisions of the Hobbs Act through strikes, work stoppages and physical

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violence at construction sites in Donaldsonville and Plaquemine.

As a result, the indictment said, competition among concrete suppliers in the Baton Rouge area has been suppressed and purchasers of concrete products have been deprived of an opportunity to purchase their concrete requirements in an open and competitive market.

IN 1968, the sale and distribution of concrete products in the Baton Rouge area amounted to \$16 million. Of that amount, the Dunham companies sold 58 per cent or \$9 million.

The concrete products involved are primarily ready mixed concrete and concrete pipe, which are vital to the continued growth and expansion of the Baton Rouge industrial area.

Partin first became the fair-haired boy of the Justice Department in 1962 when he became the No. 1 government informer against International Teamster boss James Hoffa.

It was Partin's testimony that was the key to convicting Hoffa of jury tampering for which Hoffa drew a seven-year prison sentence in 1964.

PARTIN WAS in a Baton Rouge jail under a kidnaping charge and was faced with 26 counts under a federal indictment accusing him of embezzlement and falsification of union records.

He also was faced with a negligent homicide charge

rendered against him.

Partin already had been behind bars nine days on the unbondable kidnaping charge when he approached the chief investigator (now City Judge Hawk Daniels) for the East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney.

THE TEAMSTER boss, who grew up in the violence of poverty, related a bizarre story of a plot to assassinate then Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy.

The district attorney notified the Justice Department, which was somewhat skeptical but decided to investigate. Two lie detector tests were given Partin and he passed both.

At the same time, Partin apparently convinced the Justice Department officials that he was close enough to Hoffa that he could be of service to them.

ALTHOUGH NOTHING came of the assassination story, Partin did gain his freedom from the Baton Rouge jail. The children of a co-Teamster who had been missing were suddenly returned in a midnight rendezvous at the parish courthouse.

Partin had been jailed in connection with the disappearance of the children.

Partin's bond was set at \$5,000 and he was released. He never was brought to trial on the charge and the federal indictments for embezzlement

and falsification were never pressed. In fact, only last year, the U.S. attorney's office in New Orleans sought unsuccessfully to have the indictments dismissed.

Federal Judge E. Gordon West, in refusing to throw out the indictments, suggested that Kennedy made a deal to dismiss the indictment against

Partin in exchange for his testimony in the Hoffa case.

WHEN PARTIN was released from jail he went to Tennessee, where Hoffa was on trial on another charge. His main contact there was Walter Sheridan, a former investigator for the Justice Department whose name has cropped up frequently since then in various investigations in Louisiana.

After the Hoffa conviction, Teamsters Local No. 5 split from the International Teamsters Union and Partin became sole boss of his own empire in the Baton Rouge industrial area.

Seemingly under immunity from both local and federal prosecution and closely connected with the state police, Partin operated almost with a free hand in wheeling and dealing with industrial contractors.

WHEN THE industrial boom along the Mississippi River began in 1965 Partin was riding high. He could shut down a job—being built on a cost plus basis—almost at will and industrialists soon found it was necessary to deal first with Partin before they could get off the ground on construction.

In 1967, industry apparently found itself with its backs to the wall under pressure of soaring construction costs wrought by featherbedding and payroll padding because of strong competition for skilled labor.

Costs of some construction projects were nearly 50 per cent over original estimates.

INDUSTRY STRUCK back and closed all new plant construction, laying off some 28,000 men in the Baton Rouge industrial area.

The governor's industrial development program not only was faced with debacle on the state scene, but Louisiana's

national image was in danger of a national smear because of the labor difficulties.

To counteract this, Gov. John J. McKeithen had the Legislature create the state Labor-Management Commission, and Partin became the unofficial No. 1 target of a top flight staff of investigators assembled to develop information on the situation.

PARTIN WAS charged once with aggravated assault on a television photographer for an incident at a controversial race track in Ascension Parish, believed to be owned by Partin, but has never been brought to trial.

After the Labor-Management Commission was formed, Partin started claiming that the whole effort was aimed at getting him to change his testimony regarding Hoffa.

He said there was a "fix" attempt involving agents of Hoffa and a meeting with them arranged by a former aide to the governor, Aubrey Young. One of the contacts was Dalton Smith, a New Orleans electric contractor.

SMITH WAS acquitted of

the charge in state court of attempting to bribe Young to arrange the meeting and of Partin to change his testimony.

For a while, Partin continued his operations under the protection of two federal marshals sent to Baton Rouge to watch over him.

Partin, who was divorced, lived at a Baton Rouge motel and reportedly changed his place of sleeping each night.

HE FEARED that the Mafia had been hired by the Hoffa interests to get him to change his testimony.

Partin was so well protected by the Justice Department that the Labor-Management Commission came under close investigation by federal agents for possible conspiracy.

The Labor-Management Commission's operations began to deteriorate and since have become almost nonexistent in the area. Business and industry have shrugged the commission off and now refuse to do business with it because little has been done over the past two years.

There has been a long in-

ternal fight within the Justice Department over the Partin business, with one element doing all it could to shield the Teamster official because of his Hoffa testimony.

ANOTHER ELEMENT—the antitrust division—has been after him for two years.

Up until recently the pro-Partin element has had the upper hand. But with the change of administrations from Democrat to Republican, a group of business and industrial spokesmen began applying pressure on the Justice Department's new top echelon to do something about the situation in the Baton Rouge area.

They had abandoned all hope that the state would act in the matter and were pinning their hopes on the federal government under a GOP administration.

EVEN THE scandal over the Louisiana Loan & Thrift Corp. has become mixed up with the Partin-Hoffa-Labor-Management affair.

Atty. Gen. Jack P. F. Gremillion, under indictment in

the LL&T affair, is convinced that a Justice Department attorney pulled the strings to get the grand jury indictment of him because he was pressing on the Labor-Management probe. Gremillion was handling the investigation for the state at the time, and was responsible for the only prosecutions.

Gov. McKeithen has said that he is convinced that Gremillion was indicted because of the Labor-Management business.

Meanwhile, the umbrella over Partin began to come apart as the anti-trust section began getting the upper hand in the Justice Department which was coming under increasingly sharper criticism for giving Partin what seemed like permanent immunity on everything.