

Jury Finds Smith Innocent Of Public Bribery Charge

By BILL NEIKIRK

BATON ROUGE (AP) — A state district court jury has found New Orleans contractor Dalton Smith innocent of a public bribery charge in a trial which centered on alleged efforts to free Teamsters Union president James R. Hoffa.

The five-man jury deliberated one hour and 10 minutes last night before signalling that it was ready to report. The defense called only one witness—and he was not permitted to testify.

Smith, who lived here in early 1967 when the alleged bribe attempts took place, hugged his wife and relatives after the verdict was announced.

HE WAS INDICTED in September 1967 on a charge of attempting to bribe Aubrey Young, former aide to Gov. John McKeithen. The prosecution said the offer to Young was made for an introduction to Baton Rouge Teamsters official Edward Grady Partin.

Judge Fred LeBlanc also told the jury to consider evidence that Partin, a key witness in Hoffa's federal jury tampering trial in Chattanooga, Tenn., was offered money to say there was illegal wiretapping at the trial.

Asst. Dist. Atty. Ralph Roy said in his closing argument that the prosecution's job was difficult because the state had witnesses "self-professed sympathetic to the defendant."

YOUNG, WHO described himself as a close friend of Smith, had testified that he would like to see Smith acquitted.

Roy said Partin took the position: "Why pick on this little fish when you've got so many others involved?"

Partin had testified Hoffa's representatives and not Smith offered him money.

HE SAID SMITH only had approached him to find out if there was illegal wiretapping in the jury tampering trial.

An alleged "\$65,000 Bobby Kennedy trust fund" for Partin became the focal point of the trial when Partin testified.

Partin said that an attorney for Hoffa, identified as Morris Schiffler, and a Hoffa aide, John Hardin, told him they knew of the trust fund which they claimed had been set up by the late Sen. Kennedy who was attorney general during the Hoffa trial.

PARTIN TESTIFIED that an offer was made to him that the trust fund could be matched and surpassed by Hoffa interests if he would give testimony on illegal wiretapping by the government.

Partin said he had no knowledge of a trust fund set up for him.

The discussions with Young, Smith and Hoffa interests took place in Baton Rouge and near Gramercy during early 1967, he testified.

IN HIS CLOSING argument, defense attorney Ossie Brown attacked the state for its failure to bring charges against others allegedly involved.

He said Baton Rouge apparently "is the best place in the world to have meetings if you've got influence. I believe I would come here to meet if I were a big shot."

Brown called one witness, a deputy court clerk, and asked him if there was any record of anyone else being charged in connection with the alleged attempted bribes in the Hoffa case other than Smith. Judge LeBlanc would not permit him to testify.