63

Post 1/26/67

New Hoffa Plea Today To Charge 'Bugging'

Lawyers for James R. Hoffa are expected to file charges in the Supreme Court today that the Teamster leader and the jury that tried him for obstructing justice were victims of Government "bugging."

Hoffa faces an 8-year prison term for jury-tampering unless the Supreme Court reconsiders its Dec. 12 decision upholding his conviction.

He has until Feb. 4 to file a petition for a rehearing but must file by today a petition seeking review in another case—a conviction in Chicago for misuse of Teamster funds. The bugging charges are expected to be filed at about the same time as the petition in the Chicago case.

Meanwhile Walter Sheridan, former Justice Department official who headed investigations of Hoffa, denied a published charge that he hired an FBI informant named Benjamin D. (Bud) Nichols to eavesdrop on Hoffa and the Federal jury that tried him in Chattanooga in 1964.

"I do not know Bud Nichols, never met him and never asked him to bug or wiretap at Chattanooga," said Sheridan, now a reporter with the National Broadcasting Co.

Justice Department and FBI officials refused to comment on grounds that the matter was pending in the courts. It was learned, however, that Nichols once was a paid FBI informant but that Government officials say he had no connection with the Hoffa case.

Hoffa supporters have offered rewards totalling $200,000 for information that Hoffa's convictions were tainted by electronic eavesdropping. The Supreme Court upheld the Government's use of an informer against him.