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MUTSCHER 3-16

BY MICHAEL O. WESTER

ABILENE, TEX. (UPI)--TEXAS HOUSE SPEAKER GUS F. MUTSCHER AND TWO CO-CONSPIRATORS, PROFESSING THEIR INNOCENCE AND VOWING THAT SOMEDAY THEY WILL BE VINDICATED, THURSDAY WERE GIVEN FIVE YEAR PROBATED SENTENCES FOR PLOTTING TO ACCEPT A BRIBE.

"GOD KNOWS I AM INNOCENT," MUTSCHER SAID INSIDE THE TAYLOR COUNTY COURTHOUSE AFTER THE VERDICT WAS READ.

"I DID NOT COMMIT ANY OFFENSE," MUTSCHER'S AIDE S. RUSH MCGINTY SAID. "I'M INNOCENT"

MUTSCHER, MCGINTY AND REP. TOMMY SHANNON, D-FORT WORTH, WERE FOUND GUILTY WEDNESDAY OF CONSPIRING TO ACCEPT A BRIBE IN RETURN FOR USING THEIR INFLUENCE TO PASS CERTAIN BANKING LEGISLATION.

THE THREE WERE CONVICTED OF CONSPIRING WITH HOUSTON FINANCIER FRANK W. SHARP. DURING THE COURSE OF THE INVESTIGATION IT WAS LEARNED SHARP WANTED TO GET HIS BANKS OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORP. AND WANTED LEGISLATION PASSED CREATING A STATE CHARTERED AGENCY TO INSURE DEPOSITS IN STATE BANKS.

SHARP HAD HIS EMPLOYEES DRAFT TWO BANKING BILLS WHICH WERE SUBMITTED TO A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE IN 1969. THE LEGISLATURE PASSED THE BILLS WITHOUT DEBATE BUT GOV. PRESTON SMITH VETOED THEM.

THE STATE CHARGED THAT MUTSCHER, MCGINTY AND SHANNON ACCEPTED UNSECURED LOANS FROM SHARP TO BUY STOCK IN A SHARP-OWNED COMPANY AND WERE PROMISED QUICK PROFITS ON THE STOCK IN RETURN FOR USING THEIR INFLUENCE TO SEE THAT SHARP'S BILLS PASSED.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY FRANK MALONEY SAID THE DECISION WOULD BE APPEALED.

UNLESS THEIR CONSPIRACY CONVICTIONS ARE REVERSED ON APPEAL, MUTSCHER, MCGINTY AND SHANNON WILL LOSE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE, WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM HOLDING PUBLIC OFFICE AND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO SERVE ON A JURY.

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ABOVE IS A REPEAT TO B-WIRE POINTS.

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