

Labor Probe Shifting to Prosecution

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—The state Labor - Management Commission will be reaching its first birthday this summer and in the past few months it has begun to pick up steam in its antiracketeering investigation in the Baton Rouge industrial area.

More than 100 charges have been filed against 19 persons since the probe started after the commission was created last July in a special session of the Legislature, armed with a \$250,000 appropriation. Three persons have been convicted and one pleaded guilty.

SINCE THEN, the commission and its elite staff of investigators have withstood harassment and legal attacks from the people it has been investigating; from certain sources in labor, and even from some government agencies, including the U.S. Justice Department and the state Civil Service Commission and Ethics Commission.

Most prominent of those 19 persons charged is Iberville Parish Sheriff Jessel Ourso, against whom 33 charges of extortion, bribery and malfeasance in office have been lodged.

Ourso, who has been suspended from office, an infrequently used action of the governor, also is faced with a civil ouster suit.

THE CASE against Ourso is in a sort of limbo pending completion of the 60-day regular session of the Legislature because one of his attorneys is a representative. Both the criminal charges and the civil

ouster suit were prepared by Attorney General Jack P. F. Gremillion, who has become one of the key figures in the antiracketeering fight since the probe has shifted from an investigation phase to a prosecution phase.

The present chief counsel of the commission is Tom McFerrin, who still retains his commission as an assistant attorney general and is largely responsible for getting the prosecution phase under way.

Commission activity floundered for many months and almost appeared to be dying on the political vine when an incident in the town of Plaquemine sent a shock wave through the industrial community.

THE INCIDENT was a shooting melee at a construction site where members of the W. O. Bergeron Construction Co. were wounded by a gang of union members identified by Gov. John McKeithen as Teamster Local No. 5 men.

Teamster Local No. 5, bossed by Edward Graf Partin, the controversial union leader who described himself as the number one target of the Labor-Management Commission probe.

Eleven persons were charged with 44 counts of aggravated battery, simple battery and conspiracy to commit aggravated battery as a result of the shooting episode.

Some of the same men charged in the Bergeron shooting have been accused of other crimes uncovered in the investigation.

ONE CHARGE has been lodged against Partin to date — an aggravated assault.

Turn to Page 10, Column

Prosecution Near In Labor Probe

Continued from Page 1

count growing out of an incident with a television photographer. The photographer was attempting to film construction of a controversial stock car racing track which figured prominently in one of the commission hearings. Partin purportedly has an interest in the track.

A grand jury in Ascension Parish is scheduled to be convened next month to consider evidence gathered in connection with the race track.

Also among those charged so far in the investigation are two state police sergeants, both accused of shaking down construction companies. Other state policemen's names have been brought into the hearings, but no charges have been made in their case. Next to Ourso, the most charges have been filed against a 235-pound Teamster named Wade McClanahan who identifies himself as assistant business agent of the local.

TWELVE CHARGES have been placed against McClanahan, including one for possession of a machine gun. He is one of the three convicted after a judge found him guilty of disturbing the

peace for striking a 130-pound plumber in a jurisdictional dispute in Ascension Parish.

McClanahan also is charged with making threatening phone calls to one of the Labor-Management Commission's witnesses in the machine gun possession case. On the latter charge, the union man has been bound over for trial in Livingston Parish following a preliminary court hearing.

Also convicted thus far are two Teamsters named Terry George and Edgar Coleman. A fourth man, Ivan Mendoza, pleaded guilty to a charge of receiving stolen shotguns.

GEORGE WAS convicted in East Baton Rouge District Court for simple battery in the slugging of a management official at a job construction site. The case is on appeal.

Coleman, one of the Teamsters accused in the Bergeron melee, was convicted of simple battery by Judge Daniel Kimball and sentenced to five months. The close relationship between the sheriff's department and the Teamster union which was shown during the commission hearings has since been further established. Coleman had the unique privilege of having a television set in his jail cell.

Although Ourso has been suspended, the acting sheriff, the coroner, has continued to let Ourso's men run the department.

MENDOZA PLEADED guilty to the receiving stolen property charge, which is related to a charge of malfeasance against the sheriff, and he is under a presentence investigation by Judge Ross Kearney.

James J. Morales, another Teamster involved in the hearings, is charged with stealing the shotguns that

Mendoza received. The guns allegedly were taken from a sporting goods wholesale store in Baton Rouge and fenced in Iberville Parish.

Morales also is accused of extortion. The eleven Teamsters arrested in Iberville Parish for allegedly participating in the battle royal include McClanahan, Jerry Sylvester, George Coleman, Roderick Jenkins, Lloyd W. Kinchen, Hugh Marionneaux, Alton Holden, Emery C. Hen-

drick, Jerry Kinchen and Thomas A. Craig.

A UNION MAN named Patrick G. Martone was indicted for aggravated arson by the East Baton Rouge grand jury, which also accused two other union men of lying in connection with the investigation. Martone has yet to be brought to trial.

The two state policemen charged are Stanley Jackson who resigned, and Gerald McNabb, both accused of bribery. McNabb is charged with shaking down a construction company for \$11,200 over a seven month period.

The latest arrest came last week when a Baton Rouge man named Thomas E. Holland was charged with offering a bribe to television cameraman Erby Aucoin to change his testimony in the Partin case.

With the staff of investigators planning to go to work for the attorney general's office to get around the low paying positions set by civil service, the emphasis on prosecution is expected to be heightened.