

# CBS News Is Out \$10,000, With No Clue to Hoffa Body

12/10/78  
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CBS News officials yesterday confirmed reports that they invested \$10,000 in a mysterious, "menacing" ex-convict who promised to lead them to the body of missing labor leader James R. Hoffa, but who instead disappeared with their money.

The television network is left with neither a lead to the whereabouts of Hoffa, the former Teamster president missing since July 30, nor the \$10,000 given to a freelance writer.

"I guess you could say we feel a certain amount of embarrassment," said CBS News president Richard Salant, who authorized the \$10,000 payment. "I'd be a lot less embarrassed if I found Hoffa's body."

This tale of how a presumably sophisticated network news department was apparently swindled illustrates the escalating competition for "scoops" in TV news and the perils of what has been called "checkbook journalism"—the buying of a news story from its source.

Salant, who also authorized payment of at least \$25,000 to former Nixon aide H.R. (Bob) Haldeman for a series of in-

terviews last spring, said he did not think the Hoffa hoax was a case of checkbook journalism. Instead, he said, it was a matter of hiring a freelance reporter, Patrick O'Keefe of Greensboro, N.C., to do a story.

It was O'Keefe who, on the suggestion of Harper's Magazine editor Louis Lapham, brought CBS in contact last Wednesday with a man who identified himself as Chuck Medlin. Medlin claimed to know the whereabouts of Hoffa's body, to have known Hoffa while both served terms at Lewisburg, Pa., penitentiary, and to have been a "hit man" for the Teamsters.

CBS dispatched a "60 Minutes" crew, including a producer and cameraman, to meet O'Keefe and Medlin in Key West, Fla. Medlin had told CBS that Hoffa's body was lying on the ocean floor about two miles off the Key West coast. But when the CBS crew searched the area last Saturday, they found nothing.

FBI agents in New York later identified the ex-convict as Clarence Newton Medlin and called him "armed and dangerous."

CBS' Salant said, "We didn't pay Medlin, we paid O'Keefe. It was intended as a con-

tingent payment to be held by O'Keefe and returned to us if we couldn't verify that the body they led us to was Hoffa's."

But O'Keefe, like most of those who dealt with Medlin, was frightened by him and turned the money over to him while both were staying at a Tampa motel a week ago. That was the last time he saw Medlin, O'Keefe told CBS.

O'Keefe, believed to be somewhere in Key West, could not be reached for comment yesterday. Don S. Hewitt, executive producer of "60 Minutes" and the man who made the deal with O'Keefe, did not answer telephone inquiries but issued a two-page statement about the affair.

In the statement, Hewitt said he found Medlin "very menacing" when O'Keefe brought him to CBS last Wednesday night.

Lapham, the first man O'Keefe approached with the story, said yesterday that he turned the matter over to CBS because Harper's wasn't after a news story of the type Medlin was offering. He described Medlin as "a bit of a psychopath, I would think. . . . He's crazy."