

JUSTICE OFFICIALS ACCUSED IN TEXAS

Outgoing U.S. Attorney Says Indictments Were Blocked —Criticizes Bentsen

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HOUSTON, Dec. 30—A retiring Republican United States Attorney said today that top Justice Department officials, whom he referred to as "those yo-yo's of Disneyland Northeast," blocked the proposed indictment of then Texas Gov. Preston Smith and several other state officials in a stock scandal.

Anthony J. P. Farris left the office this morning. Confirmation of his reappointment as the United States Attorney for Southeast Texas was successfully opposed last year by Senator Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr., a Democrat.

At a news conference this afternoon, Mr. Farris said that former Governor Smith and other top state officials were deeply involved in the Sharpstown stock scandal in 1970 and 1971 and that he so reported in a memorandum to the Justice Department.

But, he said, Henry E. Petersen, chief of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, and then Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst vetoed most of the proposed indictments.

"They have a thing against prosecuting people in office," Mr. Farris said, adding that the Justice Department always insisted on a "280 per cent" case where an elected official was involved.

Says He Started to Dig

During the news conference, which was held on the tenth floor of a skyscraper still under construction but already partly open in downtown Houston, Mr. Farris accused Senator Bentsen of blocking a second four-year term for him because "I started to dig through the dirt and corruption of the South Texas political bosses."

He said that Mr. Bentsen, who is an undeclared candidate for the Democratic nomination for President, owed his first election to the House after World War II and his later election to the Senate in 1970 to these "bosses."

Senator Bentsen's office is-

sued a statement, quoting him as saying, "Mr. Farris's comments are strictly sour grapes. In blocking his appointment, I was merely following the lead of the Republican Attorney General and Mr. Farris's other superiors who had removed him from the Sharpstown case."

Mr. Farris so highlighted the Sharpstown case that despite millions stolen from the Jesuit order, despite many innocent bank depositors and stockholders suffering losses, Mr. Farris let the admitted central figure go free.

"Also, it is amusing that the mentioned South Texas political bosses launching me into politics, since I made my entry into politics running against

them."

Happy Interview

Mr. Farris appeared to be thoroughly enjoying himself during the our-long interview. Occasionally, he broke into a grin.

Calling Mr. Bentsen "L.B.J. with a button-down collar," Mr. Farris said the Senator needed the support of "bosses" such as George Parr, the so-called "Duke of Duval" County, and Sheriff Rene Soliz of Starr County, if he was to win the nomination for President.

"I prosecuted Soliz for stealing votes and Parr for not paying his taxes," Mr. Farris said.

He said that Senator Bentsen had never tried to interfere in either case, but that during the investigation of Mr. Soliz and Mr. Parr "a Congressman close to Senator Bentsen," Representative Eligio de la Garza, a Democrat, "talked to me and told me I was politically naive, that Bentsen was going to be senator. He was right."

Sheriff Soliz was sentenced to 30 days in jail on the vote-stealing charge, and Mr. Parr was sentenced to five years. Mr. Parr's conviction is now on appeal.

Efforts to reach Mr. Smith and Mr. Parr for comment were unsuccessful.

Lost in Duval County

In 1970, in the Democratic primary, Mr. Bentsen defeated Senator Ralph Yarborough statewide. But in Duval County, where the Parr organization holds sway, the vote was Bentsen, 264, Yarborough, 3,993.

Mr. Farris, who was appointed a United States Attorney in 1969 by President Nixon, stayed in office after his term expired because a successor had not been named.

He said that Senator Bentsen had knowingly made "false statements" in criticizing the way the Sharpstown scandal was handled by Mr. Farris.

In the Sharpstown case, the Houston speculator Frank W. Sharp manipulated a state bank, an insurance company and a stock issue. Mr. Smith, then governor, and several other state officials made large profits by trading in the stock with money lent to them by Mr. Sharp.

Fourteen persons have been convicted or pleaded guilty in Federal Court to crimes growing out of the scandal. Three have been convicted in state court.

Mr. Sharp pleaded guilty to two felonies and was put on probation by Federal District Judge John V. Singleton.