

Don't Shoot Down Stool Pigeon, Supreme Court Urged in Hoffa Case

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Stool pigeons, like the informant who double-crossed Teamster President James R. Hoffa, play a vital role in modern society, the Supreme Court was told yesterday.

Fred M. Vinson Jr., chief of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, urged the Court not to lay down rules that would "hamper the use of informants" by Government crime-fighters coping with "increasingly sophisticated" forms of lawlessness.

Hoffa's lawyer countered that what is more sophisticated is the way "the police are evading constitutional requirements" as fast as the Supreme Court can declare them.

Hoffa in Court

The Teamster leader, who listened in the courtroom with little show of expression as lawyers and justices argued about his fate, is fighting an 8-year prison sentence for tampering with a Federal jury that tried him in 1962.

Hoffa's trial, held in Nashville, Tenn., resulted in a hung jury, but it brought forth the jury-fixing charges and Hoffa's conviction in 1964 in Chattanooga.

The key prosecution witness—called an informant by the lawyers but dubbed a "stool pigeon" by Justice Potter Stewart—was a trusted Teamster, Edward G. Partin of Baton Rouge, La. Partin told of incriminating confidences uttered by Hoffa and others while he served as doorman, chairmover and ashtray carrier in Hoffa's Nashville hotel suite.

Danies Planting Spy

Vinson denied that Partin was "placed" in the defense camp to learn secrets of trial strategy and said none of Hoffa's rights to privacy and the assistance of counsel had been violated.

Vinson said, "Unfortunately, there has crept into our society a tendency to deprecate those who assist law enforcement. This applies in spades to informants. As our society

grows more complex, so does the rapacity of those who would corrupt society."

Cites 'Victimless Crimes'

Because of the underworld's code of silence, Vinson added "any criminal scheme which is well bankrolled and well planned can be insulated at the top layers." He said this was especially true of the so-called "victimless crimes" like bribery, where there are no individual victims and "only the body political" suffers.

In rebuttal, Fanelli said he thought for a while that Vinson "was talking about the Department of Justice. He rapped Vinson's claim that Hoffa consented to Partin's presence, saying Hoffa "did not know the critical fact that this was a cop" in disguise.

Vinson said that even if Partin invaded Hoffa's constitutional rights during the Nashville trial, the court should not exclude the evidence produced in the Chattanooga trial, where no violation was charged.