

Report McKeithen Is Warned to 'Lay Off' Partin

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BY BILL LYNCH

BATON ROUGE (States-Item Bureau) — Gov. John J. McKeithen reportedly received suggestions last month during a trip to Washington not to press the state Labor-Management Commission's investigation of Baton Rouge Teamster boss Edward G. Partin.

The governor, in an interview with the States-Item, denied that a threat had been issued but confirmed that he met with Walter Sheridan, former U.S. Justice Department special agent, and discussed the investigation.

Sheridan was the key federal official who worked with Partin in obtaining the conviction of international Teamster President James Hoffa on a jury-tampering charge.

PARTIN WAS FREED from a Baton Rouge jail, where he was being held on federal and state charges, before he testified against Hoffa. McKeithen said he met with Sheridan, who now is an investigator for

the National Broadcasting Company, to allay any suspicion that his motives in pressing the Baton Rouge labor investigation were to get Hoffa free.

Sheridan was waiting in a hotel room for McKeithen when the governor arrived Feb. 14 by private plane from Louisiana. They conferred privately for nearly two hours.

The governor said that the meeting was pre-arranged on a mutual basis, with each desiring to talk with the other. He said that Sheridan was a focal point of persons in the Justice Department and "national magazines" interested in seeing that Hoffa is not released.

Partin has alleged that a number of bribes have been offered him to alter his testimony, which was essential in the government's case in the jury-tampering trial. The governor said Sheridan related to him all of the difficulties and obstacles that de-

veloped in the efforts to jail Hoffa.

MCKEITHEN SAID he asked Sheridan if he wanted him to abandon his duty by not investigating Partin and he said the latter replied he did not expect that.

Reports on the conversation

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between McKeithen and Sheridan have been circulating widely in the Baton Rouge area. A group of industrialists concerned about the lack of progress by the Labor-Management Commission, held a meeting Monday in Baton Rouge at which the report was discussed.

Some fear was expressed that a pullback may have been ordered but McKeithen declared that he, more than anyone else, has been pushing the labor racketeering investigation. McKeithen said it was he who wanted the commission to act as a fact-finding

group, even if it did not have the evidence of guilt.

He said he was greatly disappointed that the commission did not resume its public hearings immediately, instead of waiting until March 18.

He insisted that the burden of maintaining the commis-

sion's activity has been on his shoulders.

The governor said he felt that the recent series of Life Magazine articles on organized crime in Louisiana and the alleged bribe offers to free Hoffa were prompted by Partin. Since then, he said, Life Magazine has placed full confidence in him.

AFTER A SHOOTING incident in Iberville Parish when he publicly denounced Teamster Local No. 5, which is headed by Partin, McKeithen said he called a Life Magazine spokesman and in-

formed the latter he was going to do it.

He said that he learned that Partin later called the magazine and complained that the governor's action was linked with efforts to free Hoffa. McKeithen said he decided to talk with Sheridan because of his strong connections with both Justice Department officials and national magazines.

Sheridan also is closely associated with Sen. Robert F. Kennedy of New York, who was the attorney general when the Justice Department prosecuted Hoffa.

Sheridan is also the NBC investigator who played a prominent role in the network show attacking New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's probe of the assassination of President Kennedy.

SHERIDAN ALSO met with New Orleans District Judge Malcolm O'Hara, a gainst whom an ouster proceeding

has been filed for his alleged role in efforts to get Partin to change his testimony.

The rapport that exists between the U. S. Justice Department and Partin has long been established. Only recently, the U. S. attorney in New Orleans filed a petition in court to drop embezzlement indictments against Partin, claiming that the best interests of justice would be served. The court has not yet acted on the petition.

East Baton Rouge Parish officials also cooperated with the Justice Department, and did not prosecute state charges pending against Partin in 1962. The charge included kidnaping. A state charge against Partin in Alabama of manslaughter grew out of an automobile accident has not been pursued.

IN WRITING A dissenting opinion in the Hoffa hearing before the U. S. Supreme

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Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren said:

"Here Edward Partin, a jailbird languishing in a Louisiana jail under indictments for such state and federal crimes as embezzlement, kidnaping and manslaughter (and soon to be charged with perjury and assault), contacted federal authorities and told them he was willing to become, and would be useful as, an informer against Hoffa, who was then about to be tried . . .

"A motive for his doing this is immediately apparent — namely, his strong desire to work his way out of jail and out of his various legal entanglements with the state and federal government.

"And it has been interesting to note that, if this was his motive, he was uniquely successful in satisfying it. In the four years since he first volunteered to be an informer against Hoffa, he has not been prosecuted on any of the serious federal charges for which he was at that time jailed and the state charge has apparently vanished into thin air."

WARREN NOTED that shortly after Partin contacted federal authorities his bail was "suddenly reduced from \$50,000 to \$5,000 and he was released from jail. Warren further noted that Partin collaborated with a state law enforcement official in tape recording a conversation with Hoffa.

An affidavit was filed with the federal court in Chattanooga by a one-time cellmate of Partin in which it was stated that Partin worked through Bill Daniels, a one-time assistant district attorney and now a city judge in Baton Rouge, to contact federal agents. This was, of course, before the case went to the U. S. Supreme Court.

After his release, Partin went to Nashville, Tenn., where Hoffa was being tried on a Taft-Hartley law violation in 1962. It was there that he provided Sheridan with information on jury tampering in the 1962 trial which resulted in a hung jury. The government subsequently successfully prosecuted Hoffa in 1964 on the jury-tampering charge.

THE GOVERNMENT insisted to the court that there was no necessary connection between the dropping of charges against Partin and the payment of \$1,200 to Partin's wife and his role as an informer. There has been some concern expressed over the lack of criminal charges being filed against persons involved in the alleged shake-downs of construction firms in Iberville Parish.

The ouster proceeding against Sheriff Jessel M. Ourso is a civil suit, but it contains a large number of allegations of criminal violations both by him and others participating.

McKeithen said that the state attorney general may have his hands full in prosecuting the civil suit and is not ready to file criminal charges.

The attorney general's only comment on criminal charges thus far has been that it's too early to say anything. Criminal charges which have been filed grew out of the investigation into a shooting incident.

Another incident which has raised alarm was the muzzling of chief investigator A. Harry Roberts, who had been making speeches about the commission's work. The reason given for cancelling scheduled speeches is that they might jeopardize future cases.