

Bribery Trial Left

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — The defense in the Dalton Smith public bribery trial this week raised an interesting point. Why weren't other persons whose names figured prominently in the case—even more so than Smith—indicted or charged?

No matter how much the prosecution argued that it wasn't a valid legal question, there seems little doubt that the issue lingered in the minds of the jurors just as it did with the spectators.

Smith, the defense said, was a little fish in the scheme that was supposed to be an effort to spring international Teamster boss James Hoffa from prison on a federal jury tampering conviction.

If there is a valid reason for not having charged the others, two of whom were top Hoffa aides, then the public ought to be apprised of it by the district attorney's office.

The so-called efforts to sway the testimony of Baton Rouge Teamster leader Edward Grady Partin with upwards of a million dollars in bribes has gained considerable publicity over the past year and a half. Partin was the key government witness against Hoffa and claims that he has been urged to change his testimony enough to show that there was wire tapping involved.

The effort by Smith, a New Orleans electrical contractor, was not the only such incident, according to Partin.

It was testimony by Partin that led to one charge against Smith and testimony by former governor's aid Aubrey Young that led to a grand jury indictment for public bribery.

Surely the names that came up during the trial of Smith this past week were available 18 months ago when he was indicted.

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THE LACK OF PROSECUTION or the lack of a reasonable explanation for failing to act on such matters in the Baton Rouge area was the basis for a blistering statement recently by a spokesman for the Louisiana Manufacturers Association. Ford Lacey, executive director of the LMA, said a lack of adequate law enforcement was responsible for the failure to settle the labor-management difficulties in the area.

Management officials, it has been learned, have refused to cooperate further with the Labor-Management Commission investigators in their attempts to probe additional segments of labor racketeering.



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"Act on what you already have," the management people are saying.

The Labor-Management Commission filled volumes on top of volumes with testimony about labor racketeering in the area and the results thus far have been far below expectations and the hopes of management.

At present there is labor peace in the Baton Rouge area, but the conditions that led to the plant construction shutdown two years ago have not been greatly improved.

The management people want the commission or the proper law enforcement officials to proceed on the information already developed not only in investigations but in the extensive public hearings held by the group.

This was the reason the Labor-Management Commission called off tentatively scheduled public hearings during the past few weeks. Management officials were viewing the pending hearings as a whitewash attempt to convince the general public that everything was all right now.

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ONE OF THE MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS of the commission was the investigation that led to the ouster of Iberville Parish Sheriff Jessel Ourso. Criminal charges

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also were filed against Ourso, but there is speculation that the administration made a deal with the sheriff not to push these in return for his resignation. Thus far there has been no move to press the criminal charges.

Indictments were brought in a bombing incident in Baton Rouge, but the district attorney has failed to prosecute the cases, taking the position that the witnesses were unreliable.

There was a great deal of information brought out about state police involvement in the labor situation, but the only action taken thus far was the suspension of two troopers, one of whom was tried and acquitted on one charge.

There was information developed in the hearings that the state police showed favoritism in promoting certain businesses in construction work but the only further investigation was conducted by the state police itself and nothing done.

The Governor has asked the district attorney of Iberville Parish, whom he once supplanted with the attorney general, to prosecute the persons arrested in a shootout at a construction site in the town of Plaquemine. The case has been dragging and there is little indication it will be brought

to a successful conclusion anytime soon.

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THERE IS ONE RAY OF LIGHT in the whole area — reports are circulating that a federal grand jury in New Orleans considering information developed by the antitrust section of the Justice Department may be about to return some indictments.

For some time there has been a split in the U.S. Justice Department over the handling of the Baton Rouge situation, with Partin being protected by one element because he was the chief witness against Hoffa.

Any attempt to strike at Partin was viewed as an effort to free Hoffa.

With the advent of the Republican administration, businessmen in the Baton Rouge area have used every imaginable avenue to convince the new leaders that federal action must be taken. The Justice Department's attitude may have shifted recently.

Certain present and former Justice Department officials were so concerned over the fate of Partin that they went so far as to contact Gov. McKeithen privately. In Washington, have been in constant contact with Partin and even investigated the Labor-Management Commission.