

S-1 2/27/78

'Tap' on Gremillion Is Denied by LaCour

Former U.S. Attorney Louis LaCour denied today his office or any federal agency he knows of had anything to do with tapping the telephone of Attorney General Jack P. F. Gremillion.

LaCour's statement came in testimony before Federal District Judge Frederick J. R. Heebe in the third day of an often-heated hearing on pre-trial motions in the federal con-

spiracy and fraud case against Gremillion and four other persons.

Testimony of four witnesses this morning centered around the incident in May, 1968, in which a tap on Gremillion's phone was discovered.

LaCour acknowledged coming into possession of tapes of phone conversations on which Gremillion's voice was heard but denied the conversations had anything to do with the Louisiana Loan and Thrift case, in which the indictments against the five defendants are based.

One such tape was given him by a representative of the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's office and one came as a result of the arrest of an investigator for teamster leader Edward Grady Partin, testimony brought out.

Gremillion and the other four are charged on 16 counts of conspiracy, mail fraud and fraud in the sale of securities in connection with the financial troubles of LL&T, now in bankruptcy.

The other four defendants are state Rep. Salvador Anzelmo, Ernest A. Bartlett Jr. of Fort Smith, Ark., Charles H. Ritchey of New Orleans and Joseph Kavanaugh of Baton Rouge.

THE HEARING IS on a total of 79 motions filed by the defendants, including motions for separate trials for each.

The first witness today was former FBI agent Stewart Scheer of Metairie, called by Gremillion's attorney H. Alva Brumfield.

He said Gremillion asked

him to determine whether there was a tap on the phone of his home in Baton Rouge. He said his investigation showed an unauthorized tap line running from the Gremillion home to another residence behind it, some 30 feet away.

He said he returned the following day, May 25, and found the tap removed. He said he could not tell who put the tap on or who took it off.

SCHER SAID he was accompanied by James Curley, an attorney for the Louisiana Legislative Council, and Barry Marioneaux, an investigator for the attorney general's office assigned to the Labor-Management Commission.

Judge Heebe asked Scheer if he had any information that the federal government

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tapped the phone. Scheer said he did not.

Curley was called to the stand and his testimony generally followed that of Scheer.

MARIGNEAUX SAID he questioned the owner of the house behind Gremillion, accompanied by the attorney general himself, and looked over the premises with the permission of the owner, Richard Boeke.

He also testified about the arrest of George Wyatt, the

Partin investigator, when tapes were seized. One of the tapes, Marigneaux said, had Gremillion's voice on it.

LaCour testified he heard a tape of a board meeting of LL&T in August, 1967, and said he thought one of the voices on the tape was that of Gremillion.

HOWEVER, he said the material on the tape did not pertain to the present charges against the five defendants. None of the taped information provided any leads in the present case, he said.

Julian R. Murray Jr., assistant U.S. Attorney, complained that courtroom decorum was breaking down and attorneys were laughing at questions asked of witnesses. The judge admonished all present to maintain dignity.

Yesterday, Judge Heebe directed defense attorneys to limit their examinations of witnesses to factual matters.

The directive came after Murray asked for exclusion of the press or limitation of news coverage.

MURRAY MADE the request "so that any self-serving declarations will not be distributed to the public" after one of Gremillion's lawyers, Camille Gravel of Alexandria, charged that the prosecution was trying to exclude any evidence favorable to the defense.

U.S. ATTY. Gerald J. Gallinghouse agreed with stipulations concerning the testimony of An-

zelmo, Gremillion and Ritchey but reserved the right to contradict or rebut all statements the stipulations contained.

The stipulations—that each defendant basically would testify as to the innocence of the others—came after a 2½-hour private session with the judge. Gallinghouse refused to agree to the truth of any of the statements, saying only that they reflected what the defendants would say if they testified.

The defendants are seeking separate trials and contend that if they are tried together each will be deprived of calling their codefendants as witnesses because each might invoke the 5th Amendment to avoid self-incrimination.

BARTLETT, however, testified that he had never taken the 5th Amendment "in the two years of investigation" of LL&T and its sister firm, Arkansas Loan & Thrift Corp., which also was ruled insolvent.

He told Judge Heebe that he didn't think he would invoke the 5th Amendment if all of the LL&T defendants were tried together.

"I was convicted in Arkansas," he added, "and I have confidence that the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will reverse the conviction. I would not take the stand if it would jeopardize the appeal."

The Arkansas conviction, in federal court at Fort Smith, stemmed from charges involving AL&T operations. Bartlett is free on appeal bond.