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LOUISIANA POLITICS

Trouble Nothing New for Partin

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BATON ROUGE — Local Teamster Boss Edward Grady Partin was unhappily languishing in the East Baton Rouge Parish jail in 1962 — charged with kidnaping and unable to get out on bond.

He had been there nine days and things looked bleak. He was also facing 26 indictments on embezzlement and falsifying records of union funds returned by a federal grand jury, and a manslaughter indictment growing out of a fatal accident in Alabama.

Today, Partin is one of the most powerful and controversial figures in the Baton Rouge industrial area — a man seemingly immune from the law since his testimony that sent International Teamster President James Hoffa to prison on jury tampering charges.



BILL LYNCH
James Hoffa

How did a man for whom the future seemed so wretched ascend to such powerful heights that he can command the ears of the U.S. Justice Department and a national magazine?

PARTIN CONTACTED the chief investigator in the East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney's office and related a fascinating story—if true.

He had been asked to assassinate then Attorney General Robert Kennedy, he told the DA's office.

Was it true? The district attorney, Sargent Pitcher, was no Kennedy supporter, but he did not dare take a chance and dismiss it. Pitcher informed the Justice Department of Partin's statement. Did he believe it, they asked. Pitcher declined to vouch for Partin's veracity. He was simply relaying the information.

A Justice Department investigator named Grimsley came to Baton Rouge immediately and questioned Partin extensively. Lie detector equipment and a polygraph operator were brought in from Dallas, Tex. Partin underwent and passed two lie detector tests.

GRIMSLEY BELIEVED Partin's story. Another special agent, Walter Sheridan, who has been prominent in the Partin-Hoffa case as well as others in Louisiana, contacted the district attorney. Again Pitcher was asked for his opinion and again he wouldn't say yes or no.

Could the government bring Partin to Washington, the Justice Department asked.

No, Pitcher replied. The kidnaping charge was not bondable because the condition and whereabouts of two children Partin was accused of taking was unknown. If the children were returned unharmed, he said, the law would make Partin eligible for bond.

The children were the center of a custody fight between a Teamster Union member and his estranged wife who had been given custody by a court. The children had been missing for five months.

Within a few days Pitcher was awakened at 1 a. m. and told that the children would be brought to the parish courthouse. They arrived unharmed. Partin's bond was set at \$5,000 (the U. S. Supreme Court in discussing the Hoffa case said the bond had been reduced from \$50,000 to \$5,000). Partin went free.

PARTIN, WORKING through Chief Investigator Bill Daniels, who was to become an assistant district attorney and then a city judge, agreed and become an informer for the Justice Department.

He contacted Hoffa and arranged to meet him in Nashville, Tenn., on the pretext of discussing his own problems. Hoffa was on trial there for violation of the Taft-Hartley Act.

Partin informed on Hoffa and efforts to tamper with the jury and it was his testimony that sent Hoffa to jail. His main contact man during this period was Sheridan, who became an investigator for the National Broadcasting Co.

The kidnaping charge was never prosecuted. The district attorney says the mother of the children declined to testify. The federal indictments likewise were not prosecuted. A federal attorney recently asked a court to dismiss them on the grounds the best interests of justice would be served.

The latest challenge to Partin's position is now coming from the State Labor-Management Commission. Partin, himself, says he is the commission's number one target and he and Gov. McKeithen have been engaging in a verbal battle.

FBI DIRECTOR J. EDGAR Hoover has promised to see if he can provide District Attorney Pitcher with records of a telephone link between the State Capitol and rackets figure Carlos Marcello.

He was contacted last Saturday night by an agent of the FBI and was asked specifically what was wanted.

This week, Gov. McKeithen also made a request to the FBI head and to Attorney General Ramsey Clark to provide the much sought records.

TEMPERS ARE GROWING short in the state legislative budget committee, which is faced with the problem of drawing up a budget without knowing if additional revenues will be forthcoming through more taxes.

Members feel the state needs another \$70 million more in revenues just to meet the demands of present programs—but unless more funds are provided the state may wind up with a \$38 million deficit.

Department heads appearing before the budget committee are being told not to leave with a smile, lest they be too optimistic about all the talk of increased taxes.

Gov. McKeithen said he would raise taxes on wine, whisky, beer, cigarettes and automobiles, but a much broader base tax appears to be required if all the programs now being considered are to be carried out.