

Governor Airs Stand on Hoffa, Partin Issue

Gov. John J. McKeithen said today he met with television newsman Walter Sheridan because "I was anxious to reassure the Justice Department that what we were doing here" would have no bearing on the case against Teamster Boss James A. Hoffa.

The governor said the Justice Department was concerned lest the state's investigation of Baton Rouge Teamster Leader Edward G. Partin might lead to Hoffa's release from prison.

INTERVIEWED AT THE Roosevelt Hotel, McKeithen said Louisiana had no intention of being connected with any effort to free Hoffa from prison but the state wasn't going to allow Partin "open season" just because he helped to convict Hoffa.

The governor said that Sheridan, former member of the Justice Department, was primarily responsible for Hoffa's conviction.

It was Partin's testimony that clinched Hoffa's conviction on jury tampering

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charges. Hoffa now is serving a term in federal prison.

On Friday, Bill Lynch of the States-Item's Baton Rouge Bureau, reported exclusively that McKeithen confirmed the Sheridan meeting in Washington.

The governor this morning said he specifically asked Sheridan whether the Justice Department wanted him to "lay off" Partin. Sheridan said he "couldn't expect anything like that."

McKeithen said Sheridan told him he just wanted to make sure Partin wasn't being persecuted because of Hoffa, indicating to the governor that huge sums of money and a great deal of pressure were being exerted to free Hoffa.

THE GOVERNOR said he reassured the former U.S. investigator that the state was interested in Partin, not Hoffa.

He said Sheridan's concern was probably prompted by "Partin hollering to everybody about being persecuted."

On another subject, the governor said that he expects some legislation regulating salt mining as a result of the disaster at Belle Isle which cost the lives of 21 mine workers.

He said recommendations from the U.S. Bureau of Mines would be considered before any action was taken.

Concerning new taxes which may be considered in the May session of the Legislature, McKeithen indicated that he preferred a tax on alcoholic beverages rather than on gasoline.

THE GOVERNOR said that taxes should be placed in an area where Louisiana is not among the highest in the nation. He said the state's gasoline tax is already among the highest in the nation.

Among reasons he assigned for the need of additional taxation were the increase in state employes' and teachers' pay, more funds for Delgado College and Louisiana State University in New Orleans, the funding of New Orleans Mississippi River Bridge approaches and a new highway along the west bank of the river.

Referring to proposed salary increases for the governor and lieutenant governor, McKeithen indicated they may be considered.

He said that traditionally the governor's salary had been used as a buffer to prevent other state employes from drawing excessively high salaries.

"However," he said, "we are going to have to pay more money to get qualified people in state government."