

# ITT Admits Order To Destroy Files

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — A senior ITT vice president testified today that Washington staff employes were ordered to destroy any documents in their files that columnist Jack Anderson might use to "cause unwarranted embarrassment" to anyone mentioned in them.

Howard J. Aibel, who also is general counsel of International Telephone and Telegraphs Corp., said the order came from William R. Merriam, the conglomerate's Washington vice president, one day after an Anderson associate appeared at his office Feb. 23 with a copy of a controversial memorandum attributed to ITT's Washington lobbyist, Mrs. Dita Beard.

The memo, published in Anderson's column six days later, suggested a connection between ITT's out-of-court settlement of an anti-trust suit brought by the Justice Department and an ITT offer to help underwrite costs of the Republican national convention in San Diego next August.

Earlier, Harold Geneen, president of ITT, testified that none of the company's officials had anything to do with the disappearance from Washington of Mrs. Beard.

"I know of no ITT execu-

tive who told her to get out of town." Geneen told the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"I'm told she needed a rest. Her doctor told her to take a rest. We had a commitment from her to keep us informed of her whereabouts at all times but she did not."

In a report of a "preliminary investigation" filed with the committee, Aibel said Merriam immediately tele-

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**ITT PRESIDENT HAROLD S. GENEEN**

Denies any role in Dita's disappearance

—UPI Photo

phoned ITT headquarters in New York, which sent a security officer to check the Washington office.

The next day, Merriam told his staffers to review their files to find out if any documents were missing and "to remove any documents that were no longer needed for current operations as well as documents which, if put into Anderson's possession, could be misused and misconstrued by him so as to cause unwarranted embarrassment to the people mentioned therein," Aibel said.

Mrs. Beard took part in the review of her files, he said, but "no copies were found of the memorandum which (Anderson associate Brit) Hume had displayed during his visit."

#### 'Shredding Machine'

Many of the documents removed from the office files were "put through the office shredding machine," Aibel said, but none was destroyed which should have been preserved under the internal revenue code or other law or regulations.

"No one interviewed in the Washington office (by ITT investigators) knows of any ITT documents which were destroyed which directly or indirectly linked the settlement of the ITT antitrust cases with ITT's commitment to support the effort of the San Diego convention bureau to have San Diego selected as the site of the Republican national convention," he said.

There was no explanation why Hume's "original ribbon copy" of the controversial Beard memo was the only one found by Washington ITT officials. Aibel said Hume's copy "appeared to be an ITT memorandum which had come into his possession through theft or other misappropriation," but he did not deny it might have been written by Mrs. Beard.