

(See this file 16 Apr 71.)

NOV 9 1971

NYTimes

U.S. COURT OPENS REP. DOWDY TRIAL

Starts Screening of Jury in 1965 Bribery Case

Special to The New York Times

BALTIMORE, Nov. 8 The bribery, conspiracy and perjury trial of Representative John Dowdy, Democrat of Texas, began today with the screening of a jury panel in Federal District Court here.

The 59-year-old former chairman of the House District Education Subcommittee is charged with accepting a \$25,000 bribe to interfere with a 1965 Justice Department investigation into a now-defunct home improvement company.

Judge Roszel C. Thomsen said he expected the jury screening process to continue tomorrow. Stephen H. Sachs, a former United States Attorney for Maryland, is prosecuting the case; Mr. Dowdy is being defended by John W. Key Jr. of Texas and Leon H. A. Pierson of Baltimore.

At a brief news conference during the lunch break today, Mr. Dowdy repeated his contention that he had been "framed." He said, "Because it didn't happen, I am confident of being exonerated."

In March, 1970, Mr. Dowdy publicly denied the charges against him. He contended that the prosecution was depending on "witnesses who are both convicted criminals and professional con artists."

The two main witnesses are expected to be former officials of the improvement company—Myrvin C. Clark, the sales manager of the Monarch Construction Company, of Silver Spring, Md., and Nathan H. Cohen, president of the company.

Clark has already pleaded guilty of paying Mr. Dowdy \$25,000 at an airport in Atlanta.

Mr. Conen was named as a co-conspirator in the indictment, but he was not charged.

The case prompted some controversy on Capitol Hill because four of Mr. Dowdy's conversations with an informant for the Federal Bureau of Investigation were recorded.

Bobbs Accuses F.B.I.

After the use of the recording devices was disclosed during pretrial motions, Representative Hals Boggs of Louisiana, the House majority leader, accused the F.B.I. of tapping the telephones of several other Congressmen.

The indictment charges that Mr. Dowdy attempted to interfere with the investigation of Monarch, primarily by using the powers of his position as a committee chairman.

Among the actions Mr. Dowdy is accused of are taking subpoenaing papers involving the repair company's activities in Washington urban renewal programs and making photocopies of Federal Housing Administration files to pass on to Mr. Cohen.

Mr. Dowdy is also accused of lying under oath to the Federal grand jury investigating his connections with the repair company.

The electronic evasdropping was done with the cooperation of Mr. Cohen. It included tape recordings of two telephone conversations between Mr. Dowdy and Mr. Cohen.

Judge Thomsen authorized the surveillance and said it had been approved by Attorney General John N. Mitchell and J. Edgar Hoover, director of the F.B.I.

Mr. Dowdy's defense is being financed, in part, with a \$21,000 contribution from the Liberty Lobby, a right-wing organization that contends that the case is a "frame-up by leftists who have indicted [Mr. Dowdy] on a trumped-up Federal bribery charge."

The case had been postponed six times because Mr. Dowdy has had continued health problems after a back operation in September, 1970.