

Printed with Jack Anderson column (filed
w/gate):

Allegation of Payoff To Eastland Denied

Associated Press

An allegation by columnist Jack Anderson that Sen. James O. Eastland took a \$50,000 payoff was denied yesterday by a lawyer for the man who is supposed to have made the accusation.

Texas lawyer Scott Odom said in a telephone interview that his client, John W. Curington, did not make a statement attributed to him, and knows nothing of a payoff.

Another lawyer, Jerry Patchen, had testified that Curington told him wealthy Dallas oilman Nelson Bunker Hunt paid Eastland (D-Miss.) \$50,000 or \$60,000 to ward off a federal indictment on a charge of industrial wiretapping.

Odom denied that Curington made such a charge. He didn't make any statement that outlandish at all, Odom said. "He didn't have any knowledge of that."

But Patchen stuck by his statements in a telephone interview yesterday. He said Curington told him several times of a Hunt-Eastland payoff, but added that Curington did not claim firsthand knowledge of such a deal and didn't offer any evidence to substantiate it.

"I have never suggested that Sen. Eastland received any money. All I said was what John Curington told me," Patchen said. "And now if Curington is changing his tune, well, he may have his own reasons for that."

The payoff charge was raised publicly on Monday in a column by Jack Anderson and Les Whitten. They printed Patchen's account, along with denials from Hunt and Eastland, but did not quote Curington directly. Told of the new denial, Whitten said, "Our column accurately reflected the testimony in the case."