

ATTEMPT TO FREE HOFFA

Judge O'Hara Admits Visit to Partin

A Louisiana Supreme Court transcript released today revealed that Criminal Court Judge Malcolm V. O'Hara admitted he sought the cooperation of Baton Rouge Teamster Union official Edward Grady Partin in an attempt to free convicted national Teamster boss James R. Hoffa, from prison.

The admission was contained in 633 pages of testimony given in five closed sessions before Supreme Court Commissioner Michael M. Irwin, appointed to hear testimony in a suit seeking the removal of Judge O'Hara. An open hearing on the suit is scheduled for May 3.

THE removal petition, filed by State Atty. Gen. Jack P. F. Gremillion, charges that Judge O'Hara took part in efforts to have Partin, a key witness in the Chattanooga trial of Hoffa, change his testimony.

In the testimony before Irwin, O'Hara admitted that he asked Partin to sign a statement. He said, however, that he told Partin he wanted only to get at the truth in the matter and that he told Partin "if it (the statement) is not true, I don't blame you for not signing."

Other witnesses whose testimony was revealed today included District Attorney Jim Garrison, who was asked how O'Hara's activities or functions as judge in Section A of Criminal District Court compared with those of other criminal judges.

"I would have to say that, with regard to his operations as judge, Judge O'Hara was

a very competent Criminal District Judge," Garrison said.

GARRISON testified he was aware of the complaints against the judge and said, "I would have to conclude that there was no criminal aspect whatsoever or a high crime or a misdemeanor." He said none of his staff members have complained about the judge's conduct.

Gremillion alleges that O'Hara took part in efforts to obtain reversal of the federal court convictions of both Hoffa, now in a federal penitentiary, and former New Orleans builder Zachary Strate, now living in Florida.

In the transcript, O'Hara is quoted as saying to Partin: "Mr. Partin, I am here with a document which has been

prepared by an attorney. And I want you to read it carefully. I want you to consider it, and if you see fit, you can sign it if you will."

O'Hara testified that Partin declared, "I can't sign this." Partin told him he could not substantiate what was in the

(Turn to Page 8, Column 2)

Continued from Front Page

affidavit and O'Hara quoted him as saying, "If I sign it I might become a perjurer."

THE JUDGE also said that James H. "Buddy" Gill, managing director of the Baton Rouge Industrial Contractors Association, was at the meeting with Partin.

In the transcript, Gill testified that Partin told him at one time, "I would like to get this thing all settled by myself, and I don't mean by that, but I did tell him that, if he did change his testimony, he would be a big fool."

Judge O'Hara also admitted that he made one or two trips to Teamsters Union headquarters in Washington, D. C.

Assistant Atty. Gen. John E. Jackson Jr., in the record released today, asked of O'Hara:

Q. How many times did you go to Washington by yourself, judge?

A. One.

Q. How many times did you go with Mr. Strate?

A. Two or three times.

Q. On those occasions, did Mr. Strate pay for those trips to Washington?

Here, Russell Schonekas, counsel for O'Hara, asked: "What occasions, the one with him or the first occasion?"

Gremillion broke in and said, "All of them."

Judge O'Hara then said, "I paid my way, possibly twice."

Q. Would it be fair to say that Mr. Strate paid for your trips to Washington on at least two occasions?

A. Yes.

Q. Did he also pay for your accommodations?

A. Yes, he did.

Q. Did he also pay for the social part of the trip, beverages and food?

A. If a bottle of liquor or beer was sent up to the room, he paid the check.

At another point in the testimony, O'Hara was questioned about a meeting he had with a Harold Brown. Brown was an attorney in the federal trial in Chattanooga in which Hoffa was a defendant.

Q. Judge, when was the first time you met Mr. Harold Brown?

A. The day before I met Mr. Partin. I believe the exact date was March 2, 1967.

Q. Prior to meeting Mr. Brown, how many telephone conversations do you remember you had with Mr. Gill to set up the meeting with Mr. Partin?

A. Several.

Partin in a court action filed in October, 1967, charged that Gill carried a \$1 million bribe offer to get Partin to change his testimony.

Gill testified in the Supreme

Court hearing and also before a federal grand jury investigating the case.

O'Hara said he was asked if he had any difficulty in arranging the meeting between Partin and Gill.

He said he didn't have any trouble.

Q. Now, in the interrogatories and the pleadings, you told us you were present in the Fontainebleau Motor Hotel at the time Mr. Brown was there and Mr. Levy was also present. Now what time of day did this meeting take place?

A. To the best of my recollection, it was in the afternoon.

Q. And this was the day before the meeting with Partin was scheduled?

A. That's right.

O'Hara testified that he recalled there was some conversation about a document to be prepared to be taken to Baton Rouge to be presented to Partin.

"I heard gists of the conversation about allegations of wiretapping in Chattanooga. The gist was that this would be beneficial to all the de-

fendants in both Chattanooga and Chicago if there was any wiretapping by the government," O'Hara said.

A Baton Rouge city judge named a number of people he said were involved in a plan to have Partin change his testimony in the Hoffa case.

AFTER A number of objections by counsel for O'Hara, Judge William R. Daniels said the list would include "but not limited to them, Mr. Pate Rotolo of Baton Rouge; G. Wray Gill, attorney from New Orleans; Frank Ragano, attorney from Miami, Fla.; Wilson Abraham of Baton Rouge, and Buddy Gill of Baton Rouge."

Judge Daniels said "Mr. Sargent Pitcher would have some knowledge of the persons who contacted me and who contacted him." He said there are others, "but I can't remember them at this time." Pitcher is the Baton Rouge district attorney.

Earlier in his testimony, Daniels declined to answer the question, "on the ground that I have testified before numerous grand juries, federal and state. There have been numerous efforts to get me to sign affidavits . . . I will not want to attempt to reconstruct the testimony."

THE TESTIMONY was given over a period of four years, he said.

"Because of the obvious dangers to me," he said he did not want to review the testimony.