

INDICT EX-SHERIFF ON LABOR CHARGE

The former sheriff of Iberville Parish and a state legislator were among four persons indicted today by the federal grand jury here in connection with labor troubles in the Baton Rouge area.

Indicted under the federal Hobbs Act, which prohibits conspiring to delay, obstruct and affect interstate commerce, were:

- Jessel M. Ourso, former Iberville Parish sheriff.
- State Rep. Robert L. Freeman, an attorney from Plaquemine.
- Jimmy Morales, a mem-

ber of Local 5 of the Teamsters Union in Baton Rouge. —Lionel E. Priest, a former employe of Natural Gas Construction Co. of Houston, and the Ford, Bacon and Davis Construction Co. of Monroe.

The charges grew out of a work stoppage in 1967 on a pipeline construction project in Iberville Parish.

In Baton Rouge, Rep. Freeman, attending a session of the Louisiana Legislature, labeled the indictment an attempt to destroy him politically.

He said he had never represented Sheriff Ourso and had represented Priest only once and received no fee for it.

"IT IS A smear," Freeman declared. "I have never been contacted by any federal men."

He said, "I have never appeared before any federal men. I have never done business with Ourso."

Freeman and Priest were first brought into the labor-management picture in 1968 when state Attorney General Jack P. F. Gremillion filed a civil ouster suit against Ourso.

In the suit, Freeman was cited as the recipient of an \$8,500 check from a pipeline construction company.

OURSO WAS accused in the ouster suit of demanding pay-

ments from companies for labor peace.

The suit said Ourso presided over a session with representatives of the construction company which was working on a pipeline in Iberville.

The suit said the sheriff demanded that former Superintendent Priest be paid \$17,000 and placed on the payroll at a \$500 weekly salary and \$105 in expenses.

Further, the suit said the day after first meeting on June 29, 1967, the company president, Edgar B. Townes Jr., met with Ourso, Morales and Freeman.

A LIST of agreements was drawn up, including one that

there would be no further labor trouble.

The company, the suit continued, agreed to pay the \$17,000, which was carried as payments for past work by Priest, in July sent two checks for \$8,500 each made payable to Priest and Freeman, both sent to Freeman at his office.

The civil ouster suit was never utilized in removing Ourso, who was forced out as the result of a legislative auditor's report charging a shortage of funds in the sheriff's department.

Criminal charges later were brought by the attorney general in a move to keep Ourso from running again for office, but the charges never were prosecuted.

THE JURY, which has been investigating labor troubles in the Baton Rouge area for more than a year, returned the indictment before Federal District Judge Frederick J. R. Heebe.

The jury probe is being conducted under the direction of U.S. Attorney Gerald J. Gallinghouse and his assistants Daniel J. Markey Jr. and James D. Carriere.

If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

JUDGE HEEBE issued capias for the arrest of Ourso, Morales and Priest and set bond for them at \$5,000 each.

The three-page indictment says sums of money were demanded and received by the defendants in connection with the work stoppage in violation of the Hobbs Act.



FORMER SHERIFF
JESSEL M. OURSO



STATE REP.
ROBERT L. FREEMAN