

PUSHED CHURCHILL LEVEE, MARCELLO ASSOCIATE SAYS

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BATON ROUGE—A business associate of rackets figure Carlos Marcello today acknowledged he worked with Jefferson Parish officials and members of the Lafourche Levee Board to promote a half million dollar levee for Churchill Farms.

J. Folse Roy occupied the witness stand during the entire morning hours as the legislative Mafia investigating committee continued its second day of testimony over the controversial swamp land Marcello hopes to turn into a city of 100,000.

Earlier testimony about the farm reflected how public funds were being utilized to develop facilities that would aid in draining the swamp and provide major highway access to the 6,000-acre tract.

ROY, EXECUTIVE vice president of Churchill Farms, insisted the Lake Cataouachie Levee built across the southern portion of Churchill Farms actually protected a 30,000 acre area of land, some 12,000 persons and industries in the area from flooding.

Roy's testimony was slightly in conflict with testimony given by earlier witnesses on the effectiveness of the new levee which they said primarily benefitted Marcello's land.

Roy also said the levee provided protection for only about half of the Marcello property.

Life magazine, in its April article, charged Marcello stood to reap a bonanza from development of the property through use of public facilities planned there.

ROY ALSO acknowledged that a drainage structure located under the Hogan Canal levee on the northern side of the property could drain into the Bayou Segnette pumping station system. However, he said the gate has never been opened despite his complaints to the parish that Churchill Farms is impounding water from other areas because of the levee.

Roy also said an old pumping station on an 800-acre tract within Churchill Farms, used to drain that section in the early 1900s, was not in use despite attempts to repair it.

Chief counsel Gordon Kean commented on the unusual bends which the Lake Cataouachie Levee takes to circle Churchill Farms.

Roy said the State Department of Public Works would not permit the levee to be located elsewhere because of soil conditions and insisted it tied in with existing levees at either end.

THE REAL ESTATE developer said he complained the levee should have been located closer to the lake.

He also said he exerted every effort to have the levee board put its plans into effect or else return the servitude to the owners.

At first he declared there was a long period of delay in between the opening of bids, the award of the contract and the issuance of the work order—as much as two years. However the records showed the bid opening and

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award occurred within a matter of days in 1964 just prior to the end of the term of the old levee board and the work order followed in August of 1964.

Three witnesses testified yesterday about the Churchill Farms episode. They included Ray Condon, sanitation engineer for Jefferson Parish, Claude Hooten, architect planner for Churchill Farms, and Harold Adams, former Lafourche Levee Board member.

Roy said Hooten was employed to present a sketch of what could be done with the property because there were some negotiations to sell the property to the person who developed a similar tract in Houston.

Also scheduled to testify today are Ben J. Rome, former president of the levee board, Glenn Long, former attorney for the board; Arthur Theis, public works department engineer; and Philip Smith, who represented Churchill Farms as attorney.

Condon, whose testimony dealt mostly with the drainage of the area, declared the Bayou Segnette pumping station did not take any water from Churchill Farms.

He did acknowledge under persistent questioning by the committee that the Lake Cataouachie Levee built by the Lafourche Levee District primarily benefitted Churchill Farms.

HE ALSO related that a levee along the Hoga Canal, which drains developed property north of Churchill Farms, also protected the area from storm and tides from the lake.

Condon said an old pumping station on the Churchill Farms property was not used and that an outlet connected

the lake levee protected about 14,000 acres with Churchill Farms comprising about half.

Condon said he knew of no plans prior to 1961, when the levee was proposed by Marcello, to build the levee to protect the area and of no conditions then that would warrant it. Now, he said, levees higher than that along the Hogan Canal are needed for maximum protection.

HE ALSO acknowledged the Marcello property could not be drained without the levee.

Condon said he talked with David C. Chandler, author of the Life article, briefly and drew a map outlining the drainage facilities in the area. He insisted he made no statement that Bayou Segnette drained Churchill Farms.

Gordon Kean, chief counsel for the committee, read a letter from Legislative Auditor J. B. Lancaster which said he had been unable to locate any check for payment of the servitude. Life had charged Marcello received \$500,000 for the right of way for the levee, a payment allegedly authorized by Gov. John J. McKeithen.

Hooten testified he developed a subdivision use plan for Churchill Farms showing housing plots and road construction in 1961. The proposed levee location in Hooten's plan was generally

followed by the levee board.

HOOTEN INSISTED the levee served the entire area, in addition to the Marcello property and had it been built further to the north, it would have strangled that area economically.

He said the parish would benefit from development of property which otherwise virtually would be non-tax-paying.

Life charged Marcello would turn a \$1 million purchase into a \$60 million bonanza because of the public facilities being built.

Pumping stations planned for Churchill Farms and other property in Drainage District No. 7 have not been built because bonds authorized have not been sold.

ADAMS, IN his testimony, said he first heard of the levee in conversation with two Jefferson Parish councilmen who described it as a potential Cypress Gardens.

He said he assumed everyone knew it was Marcello property when it was discussed at the levee board, but that the reputed Mafia boss never attempted to influence him or the board.

He said he talked only once with Marcello about the levee and that was to inform him the contract had been awarded.

Adams, who was appointed by former Gov. Jimmie Davis, said when Gov. McKeithen was elected he tried

by a pipe under the levee between the canal and Churchill Farms would not admit sufficient water to drain the Marcello property.

At one point, Condon said it was not the policy of the parish to build levees for private development, but said he could not say if it was unusual for the levee protecting the Marcello property to be built with public funds. He said

unsuccessfully to see him about whether the decision on the levee should be postponed until a new board was appointed. He said Rep. A. O. Rappelet of Galliano advised him McKeithen wanted the board to go ahead with the project.
