

A States-Item **FIRST** State Capitol Phone Case Is Reopened

By **BILL LYNCH**
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—State police have been ordered by Gov. John J. McKeithen to reopen an investigation into mystery telephone calls to the Capitol, as the Justice Department revealed it has destroyed copies of the original records, the States-Item has learned.

East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Sargent Pitcher has been attempting to get records of phone calls between a telephone purportedly used by rackets figure Carlos Marcello and a phone listed to the governor's office.

THE CAPITOL phone was maintained in the office of the speaker of the House in

a locked cabinet for the convenience of C. H. "Sammy" Downs, the unpaid administrative assistant to Gov. McKeithen.

Pitcher was informed by the Justice Department that the FBI destroyed the records and "only the results of the review were furnished by the bureau to this department."

The district attorney said he is asking the department to allow him and state Atty.

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Gen. Jack P. F. Gremillion to see the "results."

A SPECIAL agent has been assigned by Public Safety Director Gen. Thomas Burbank to reopen the investigation of the telephone link.

An earlier probe had been conducted by investigators for the state Labor-Management Commission and halted when it began pointing in other directions. Life Magazine, disclosing the fact that calls were made from the Marcello phone in a Jefferson Parish motel to a Capitol phone, said they were received by Aubrey Young, former aide to the governor.

However, both Young and Downs have denied receiving any calls on the mystery phone.

RAYMOND BECK, an investigator loaned to Burbank by the Labor - Management Commission, has been assigned to re-interview all of the persons who might have knowledge of the use of the phone.

The telephone once could have been answered in the governor's suite, when Downs had an office there.

Reportedly, McKeithen told Burbank that he wanted the phone mystery cleared up no matter whose name is brought into the case. The FBI subpoenaed the records from the telephone company in New Orleans apparently in connection with another case the Justice Department was investigating. Somehow, the records fell into the hands of Life magazine, which reported the alleged phone calls between Marcello's number and Young.

THERE HAS been no satisfactory explanation of the phone calls. The Labor-Management investigation was dropped while a parallel, but separate, probe was being conducted by the district attorney.

Pitcher said a few days ago he did not think he would be able to get the records and yesterday received a letter from Fred M. Vinson, assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal division of the Justice Department.

"Copies of certain records were obtained and reviewed by the FBI pursuant to subpoena," Vinson wrote. "Only the results of the review were furnished by the bureau to this department. The copies of the records obtained by the bureau were destroyed by the bureau several months after they were reviewed."

VINSON SAID he could not be of further assistance, but Pitcher shot back a reply asking to see the "results."

"I assume the results of the review furnished by the bureau to the department were not destroyed," the district attorney said.

"I am wondering if it would be out of line or asking too much to be able to see copies of these results. If you can assist me in this matter I would be deeply grateful.

"If your answer is in the affirmative, I would be more than happy to come to your office in Washington to examine the results," Pitcher continued. "I have been advised by the attorney general of Louisiana that he would be glad to accompany me for this purpose."