

A States-Item **FIRST**

State Officials Warned Of Hoffa-Labor Unit Ties

By BILL LYNCH (States-Item Bureau)
BATON ROUGE—The U.S. Justice Department tried unsuccessfully to convince state officials that three investigators of the state Labor-Management Commission were linked with a move to free International Teamster President James Hoffa from prison, the States-Item learned today.

Both Gov. John J. McKeithen and former Commission Chairman Cecil Morgan confirmed that they had been approached with information about key members of the investigative staff.

NO ONE would say so publicly, but the action is being viewed as another effort to harass the commission.

The Justice Department has been zealously protecting the interests of Baton Rouge Teamster boss Edward Grady Partin, a key witness in the

conviction of Hoffa on jury tampering charges in 1964.

Partin is a prime target of the Labor-Management Commission investigation into

racketeering in the Baton Rouge industrial area.

A Justice Department attorney

See LABOR— Page 4

Labor—

Continued from Front Page

ney named Michael Epstein, who has been handling an alleged bribe attempt on Partin to alter his testimony, told Dean Morgan that the whole investigation was an effort to discredit Partin.

MORGAN said Epstein implied that chief investigator Harry Roberts, Ray Ruiz and Joe Oster were working for the Hoffa interests. Morgan, who stepped down as chairman in April, said Epstein was sent to him by Gov. McKeithen. He said he got the feeling there was deep-seated concern that the whole objective was to discredit Partin "and we were being used as a pawn."

"I tried to pin him down and asked him what was I supposed to do," Morgan said. "His answer was: 'I think you ought to watch out for yourself because I think you are being used.'"

Morgan said that he pressed Epstein for evidence of his allegations, but received none. He said he told the Justice Department attorney that as far as Partin is concerned he would let the chips fall where they may. The former Tulane law school dean told the States-Item that Epstein made no threat—"It was sort of an admonition that we on the commission might be used."

He said he talked the matter over with Gov. McKeithen and discussed it with Roberts, the chief counsel, and Vice Chairman Dean Paul M. Hebert.

"As far as we could find," Morgan said of Epstein's allegations "there is absolutely nothing to it."

MORGAN said, "I think there is a lot of genuine concern in the Justice Department that anything that discredits Partin affects Hoffa. I disagree with their fear." Gov. McKeithen said that he had received the information originally and advised that Epstein should take it up with Morgan.

He said he is perfectly satisfied with the conclusion of Morgan and Hebert that the allegation was without foundation.

Partin has made statements on several occasions that the Justice Department would investigate the Labor-Management Commission's investigation.

Partin worked closely with Walter Sheridan, former Justice Department official, as an informant on Hoffa in 1962.

In return the Justice Department has sought the dismissal of 26 indictments of embezzlement and falsification of Union records lodged against Partin.

SHERIDAN met with McKeithen in March, about the same time as Epstein met with Dean Morgan. The States-Item reported then that Sheridan was attempting to get McKeithen to go easy on Partin.

He was then associated with the National Broadcasting Co. and has since left the network to work for the election of Sen Robert Kennedy for president. It was while Kennedy was U.S. Attorney General that Hoffa was sent to prison.