

LOUISIANA POLITICS

Indictment Hardest Blow to Partin

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — The indictment of Edward Grady Partin, boss of Teamster Local No. 5 in Baton Rouge, by a federal grand jury is the first real blow against the iron tight grip he has held on industrial construction in this area.

Although an indictment is a long way from a conviction, as evidenced by those outstanding against him already, it appears that this time at least one segment of the Justice Department is ready to act.

Partin has managed to survive this long in the jungle of construction and contract bargaining because — as Attorney General Jack P. F. Gremillion described it — he has enjoyed influence with a wide variety of public officials.

His basic source of protection from federal prosecution, of course, has been the Jus-

tice Department, where one group has shielded him because he was the key witness against James Hoffa in a jury-tampering conviction. Hoffa is the International Teamster president now in prison.

After the Justice Department comes a peculiar protection at the local and state levels.

District attorneys in the area long have appeared reluctant to act against Partin directly or his Teamster members.

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INDICTMENTS and charges have gone unprosecuted and investigations into allegations of labor racketeering, bombings and such have been virtually nil.

Partin seems to have enjoyed a special relationship with the Baton Rouge district attorney, Sargent Pitcher, and a city judge named William Hawk Daniels.

Pitcher has been one of those public officials who, for reasons best known to himself, sided with Partin and bitterly fought the Labor-Management Commission when it was first created with a goal of nailing Partin.

Daniels has long been a

close friend and staunch supporter of the Teamster business agent. He readily defends him.

It was Daniels who was the first link between the Justice Department and Partin back in 1962.

Information brought out by the Labor-Management Commission when it still had an adequate staff and before it became an ineffectual agency has never been acted on by the Baton Rouge district attorney's office.

In fact, much of the information supplied to law enforcement officials throughout the Baton Rouge area was simply consigned to dust bins.

Although a shooting incident in Plaquemine was cited in the federal indictment, there has been little effort by the Iberville Parish district attorney to push prosecution of those charged.

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WHEN THE incident occurred in January 1968, the governor promised swift prosecution of those who took part and those who "directed it from a distance," but virtually nothing has been done.

The chief prosecutor of the case, the attorney general,

was called off and the governor's special assistant, W.W. McDougall, had the chief counsel of the commission fired. McDougall says it was for reasons of failing to move swiftly enough that the counsel was fired.

It has not been too long ago that a spokesman for industry soundly rapped area law enforcement authorities for failing to prosecute and act on information developed during the early days of the Labor-Management Commission.

Since then the commission itself has come in for sharp criticisms and has now virtually been taken over by the Baton Rouge District Attorney's office.

The process of the indictment against Partin undoubtedly will be watched closely. In Baton Rouge last year, the Justice Department stated that the interests of justice would best be served if a 26-count indictment brought in 1962 was dismissed. A federal judge refused and the matter is still pending.

Thus it is evident the whole spectrum of political life from the city through the state and national governments have been deeply involved in the Partin affair and how it turns out will be an interesting event to observe.



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