

Gremillion Phone Tap Is Revealed

By BILL LYNCH

(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — A tap was found on the telephone line to Atty. Gen. Jack P. F. Gremillion's home in 1968, shortly after he took over handling of the investigation and prosecution of Labor-Management Commission cases.

The information is expected to be revealed during a hearing on motions connected with the Louisiana Loan and Thrift Corp. indictments against Gremillion and four other persons. The hearings on various motions by the defendants is scheduled to begin tomorrow.

THE TAP was discovered
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Investigators for the Labor-Management Commission one night but was removed before it could be determined who was doing the eavesdropping.

The tap was made by a wire tied to Gremillion's telephone line outside his house. The wire ran to a vacant house next door.

A sound expert, a former FBI agent, was hired to check the attorney general's telephone after information got out that only could have been obtained in that manner.

The sound expert found the wire and traced it to the home. A light was burning in the house, but no move was made to get a search warrant that night. The sound expert was hesitant to act immediately for fear it was a tap authorized by the federal government.

INVESTIGATORS discovered that the house was vacant and it was searched the next day after the owners were contacted. However, by this time everything, including the wire to Gremillion's line, had been removed.

The attorney general and Gov. John J. McKeithen have insisted that one of the reasons the federal government investigated Gremillion on the LL&T probe was because of his involvement in the Labor-Management Commission investigation. At that time a section of the Justice Department was protecting Teamster boss Edward Grady Partin, principal target of the state probe.

Gremillion, during the course of the LL&T hearings on motions, may attempt to ascertain if the wire tap was made by federal agents and if any information was developed on his relations with the LL&T.

Judicial Probe

This newspaper is encouraged to see that the Judiciary Commission of Louisiana evidently intends to make a thorough investigation into the question of whether Criminal District Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. should continue on the bench.

Judge Haggerty, to be sure, was acquitted by a fellow judge of the criminal court, Matthew S. Braniff, of charges of soliciting for prostitution, obscenity and resisting arrest. The charges resulted from Judge Haggerty's arrest at a motel stag party Dec. 17.

The fact of Judge Haggerty's acquittal, however, does not, in our judgment, answer the question of whether he is morally fit to sit in judgment of others.

Precisely because he sits in judgment of others, a judge, more than anyone else in society, must conduct himself both in private and in public in a manner that is above reproach. People are entitled to expect their judges to be of exemplary character. Indeed, public respect for the law itself is diminished when members of the judiciary and other officials whose sworn duty it is to uphold the law conduct themselves in such a way as to damage the dignity and integrity of their offices.

The judiciary commission was created specially to rule on matters of this sort. Its recommendations go to the state Supreme Court which has the authority to remove a judge.

The Haggerty case is of particular importance to the commission, for it is the first case the newly-formed body has considered. Its actions therefore will be carefully scrutinized to see whether it means business. So far, it looks like it does.

The commission's executive officer, Robert LeCorgne, said last week that the commission would not limit itself to a mere investigation of Judge Haggerty's attendance at the stag party.

"It's more than that," said Mr. LeCorgne. "It's not being confined to one night."

Pursuant to this end, the names of more than 1,000 persons called as prospective jurors in Judge Haggerty's court have been turned over to the commission. Although there has been no official confirmation of the reason, the implication is that the jurors will be questioned about Judge Haggerty's conduct on the bench.

This newspaper supports the commission in its broadened probe of Judge Haggerty's activities, both on and off the bench.