

Partin Loses U.S.

By BILL LYNCH

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BATON ROUGE—The federal umbrella that once protected Baton Rouge Teamster boss Edward Grady Partin has been removed officially by U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell.

In a letter to the antitrust division of the Justice Department, Mitchell has ordered an all-out cleanup and investigation of the labor-management problems that engulfed the Baton Rouge area.

Partin is the business agent of Teamster Local No. 5 in Baton Rouge and has been a prime target of state and local probes involving labor racketeering in the area.

Gerald J. Gallinghouse, recently-appointed U.S. attorney for the eastern district of Louisiana which includes Baton

Rouge, is using the Mitchell edict as a vehicle for launching a determined investigation of the situation.

THE NEW ATTITUDE of the Justice Department was spawned in the ranks of the antitrust division and nurtured and fed by a small group of management officials in Baton Rouge who nearly dedicated themselves to having the umbrella stripped from Partin.

Evidence of the new position became apparent last June when Partin was indicted on five counts of antiracketeering and antitrust laws violations by a federal grand jury in New Orleans.

The indictments culminated a behind-the-scenes struggle within the Justice Department between elements of the antitrust division and the criminal division.

Those in the criminal division had long protected Partin

because he had been the federal government's star witness in the jury-tampering trial that sent international Teamster President James Hoffa to prison.

THE PROTECTION INCLUDED such events as failure to prosecute Partin on 26 counts of embezzlement and falsifying union records.

The indictments were returned in 1962, but went unprosecuted after Partin became an informant against Hoffa. In May 1968, Michael Epstein of the criminal division of the Justice Department went into federal court and asked that the indictments be dropped on the grounds the best interests of justice would be served.

"On the contrary," Judge E. Gordon West snorted, "it is making a mockery of justice." He denied the motion.

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Partin also seemingly has enjoyed a protective cover from local prosecution.

The indictment returned by the federal government in June 1969 was based on an incident in Baton Rouge that equally could have been cited in a state charge. The incident was the W. O. Bergeron Construction Co. shooting melee in Iberville Parish which was launched from Baton Rouge.

STATE CHARGES WERE LEVELED against a number of Teamster Union members in Iberville, but none was filed in Baton Rouge until the federal indictment.

The latest evidence the federal umbrella has been lifted from Partin is the recent indictment of the union official for alleged intimidation of a witness—one Wade McClanahan, his former strongarm man and close associate.

'Umbrella'

Gallinghouse has let it be known his office will not stand for interference with the investigation or witnesses and he is going all out to get results. He wants to revise the image Partin is being protected in an effort to convince witnesses they can come forward now with expectations of getting results—and protection.

A further symbol of the U.S. attorney's determination to get results is the extension of the grand jury considering the labor-management investigation. Normally grand juries sit for six months, but this one became a special grand jury and plans are for it to conduct a continuing investigation over a long period of time.

IN ADDITION TO PARTIN, Ted F. Dunham Jr. of Baton Rouge, a concrete products magnate, also has been indicted in the labor-management investigation.

The Mitchell letter heralding the new look in the Justice Department represents a victory for that handful of management people in Baton Rouge who practically dedicated themselves to seeing that the federal umbrella was folded.

Included in that group were Marion Atkins of Dow Chemical Co., Ford Lacey, executive director of the Louisiana Manufacturers Association; Lamar Walters, executive director of the state Chamber of Commerce, Vic Ehr of the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce and Tom McFerrin, assistant attorney general and part-time counsel to the LMA.

By the end of 1968, the group had given up on the state labor-management commission achieving any direct results or rooting out what they considered to be the main problem—Partin.

THE LABOR-MANAGEMENT Commission practically had changed hands—from the virtual control of management to being controlled by labor and the East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney, Sargent Pitcher, who is considered friendly to Partin. McFerrin, who had been chief counsel, was booted out by the McKeithen administration and Pitcher's people were installed in key positions.

The commission became virtually moribund. In its last dying moments the commission made big plans to conduct one more public hearing at the insistence of labor who wanted to show management was equally involved in the problems. However, even that gap went unfulfilled.

That group of management officials turned to the federal government after Richard M. Nixon became President—chiefly because they were pro-Republican and felt they could get some relief from a Republican, business-oriented administration.

HOWEVER, RELIEF WAS NOT immediately forthcoming. There still remained in the Justice Department a staunch corps of supporters of Partin and another echelon of important support from persons with good connections both to the Justice Department and the Republican administration.

It was not until the situation began receiving national notoriety and pressures were re-exerted by homestate Republicans and business men that Mitchell began to revise the Justice Department position.

But when he did, it came with a bang and has produced more results and potential results than any of that management group hoped for.



EDWARD GRADY PARTIN



GERALD J. GALLINGHOUSE