

Partin conviction a tribute to some, a slap at others

Louisiana Politics

By BILL LYNCH

of The States-Item Staff

BATON ROUGE — The conviction of Teamster boss Edward Grady Partin on labor racketeering charges is a tribute to the perseverance of a small group of management officials in Baton Rouge and the dedication of a handful of U. S. Justice Department attorneys who persisted despite opposition from within the department itself.

It is also another slap in the face at local and state law-enforcement officials who could have acted on much of the same evidence long before the federal government finally moved in to clean up the labor mess in Baton Rouge.

Partin was convicted in Atlanta, Ga., where his trial was transferred, on three counts of violating the federal anti-trust laws and one count of extortion. The extortion charge grew out of a shootout in Iberville Parish at a construction site.

Industrial breakdown

The difficulties in the Baton Rouge labor scene began more than five years ago and intensified to a point of breakdown that burst a booming construction program for new industry.

Efforts by management officials to have the state halt the turmoil ended unsuccessfully in the laxity of law enforcement on the local level from sheriffs through district attorneys and duplicity on the state level in dealing with the situation.

Finally, the small group of management officials — led by Marion Atkins, public relations official for the Dow Chemical Co. in Iberville Parish—turned to the federal government for assistance.

GOP supporters

Even there, the going was tough until the Republicans moved into the administration. At that, it took decisive pressure from top GOP supporters in Louisiana to prevail upon Attorney General John Mitchell to overcome resistance within the Justice Department to prosecuting Partin.

In March of 1970, two years after the Plaquemine shootout, Mitchell ordered the protective umbrella that had been held over Partin folded and prosecution instigated. Partin had been protected for his role in helping send International Teamster president Jimmy Hoffa to prison.

Partin had enjoyed apparent immunity from local law-enforcement interference for a long time.

Farm road shells

A former Teamster, who became the

state's star witness against Partin, Wade McClanahan, related how Baton Rouge Dist. Att. Sargent Pitcher had received shells for his farm road courtesy of Partin.

Partin operated in a free-wheeling manner for a long time, even to a great degree after the labor-management commission investigations. It was not until the federal government cracked down on him that his power in union affairs in the Baton Rouge area began to dissipate.

Wilford Whitley, an attorney for the anti-trust division of the Justice Department who was assigned to the Partin case, persevered in a long struggle against increasingly great odds to convict Partin. The first trial of the Teamster business agent was held in the pro-labor town of Butte, Mont., and ended in a mistrial. The Justice Department won a change of judges—and a change of sites for the second trial.

Considerable opposition

There was considerable opposition, particularly within the criminal division of the Justice Department, to trying Partin. That's why the matter remained in the anti-trust division rather than being handled by criminal division attorneys.

Partin and concrete company magnate Ted Dunham Jr. of Baton Rouge were indicted together and Dunham was convicted earlier and given a one-year prison sentence and fine of \$160,000 for three of his firms.

Nearly all of the investigation and prosecution was handled by the Justice Department itself, with U. S. Attorney Gerald J. Gallinghouse in New Orleans being called on for assistance.

Gallinghouse has not had the interest in the Baton Rouge labor mess that the Justice Department has had and in fact preferred to spend his efforts on fresher material like the Gulf States Utilities Co. labor-management dispute that involved violence.

Gallinghouse gets indictments

Gallinghouse brought indictments against the sheriff of Iberville Parish, Jessel Ourso, and others involved in labor racketeering and then assigned second-string help to prosecute. Two trials of Ourso ended in hung juries, with one of the defendants being acquitted.

There has been considerable dismay—particularly among citizens in Iberville Parish—over the way the prosecution of Ourso has been handled by the U. S. attorney's office. Ourso has been re-elected sheriff and his opponents feel the only salvation for the area is adequate federal prosecution, since it is obvious that the state will not act.

Meanwhile, Gallinghouse has another charge to use against Partin—allegedly that of intimidating a federal witness. McClanahan claims that he was threatened if he testified against Partin.

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Teamster Grady Partin Is Convicted

Atlanta

Edward Grady Partin, boss of one of Louisiana's largest Teamster locals, was convicted in federal court yesterday of conspiring to violate anti-trust laws and conspiracy to extort.

His lawyers, declaring the verdict a "gross injustice," moved immediately for U.S. District Judge James Battin to set aside the verdict or declare the proceeding a mistrial.

Battin, who allowed Partin to remain free on a \$25,000 recognizance bond, said he would rule on the motions by the end of the month.

Partin's face became ashen when the court clerk read the verdict. The jury deliberated more than 21 hours over three days.

Partin, 48, was accused by the government of taking part in an alleged scheme to help Baton Rouge businessman Ted Dunham Jr. monopolize the area's cement business through labor trouble and strong arm tactics.

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