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Aide Says I.T.T. Feared New Disclosures



Representative Bob Wilson, California Republican, before Judiciary Committee.

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WASHINGTON, April 10 —

The head of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation's Washington office testified today that he had ordered the shredding of office files after Jack Anderson obtained a controversial memorandum because "there might be a lot of others in there like that."

The executive, William R. Merriam, a vice president of the company, told the Senate Judiciary Committee that he had decided that it was "time to clean house" after Mr. Anderson, the columnist, obtained a memorandum purportedly written by Mrs. Dita D. Beard, a lobbyist.

Mr. Merriam and Representative Bob Wilson, Republican of California, gave testimony today that contradicted each others' statements and testimony by other witnesses.

"Somebody's not telling the truth; take your pick," concluded Senator Quentin H. Burdick, Democrat of North Dakota,

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Associated Press

W. R. Merriam, the head of the Washington office of I.T.T., after he testified.

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summing up the day's testimony.

The memorandum, which has touched of a six-week investigation, linked I.T.T.'s "noble commitment" of up to \$400,000 to underwrite the expenses of the 1972 Republican National Convention with the Justice Department's willingness to settle three antitrust cases against the corporation.

Destruction Ordered

Mr. Merriam said he had ordered destruction of any documents that might embarrass the company or its officials. But he said he could not remember if he had ever received the one published by Mr. Anderson because so many memorandums crossed his desk.

"Not alleging the kind of information that was contained in the Anderson-Beard memorandum, I trust?" asked Senator John V. Tunney, Democrat of California.

"Well, you'd be surprised," replied Mr. Merriam.

Later, Senator Edward J. Gurney, Republican of Florida, drew from Mr. Merriam the assurance that the executive did not mean that the files bulged with other documents as politically explosive as the Beard-Anderson memorandum, but only that information about foreign operations and internal financial data could be damaging if disclosed.

Other Statements

The following other statements were made today:

¶Mr. Wilson, a Republican who represents most of the San Diego area, explained that Mrs. Beard told him in late February that she was not the author of the memorandum published by Mr. Anderson. Asked why he had not mentioned this when he gave three news interviews about the case in early March, he said, "I was never asked."

The first time the authenticity of the memorandum was publicly challenged was when I.T.T. and Mrs. Beard branded it a forgery in late March.

¶Mr. Wilson testified that Harold S. Geneen, the president of the corporation had made a "personal commitment" to guarantee up to \$400,000 of the convention's expenses in San Diego. Mr. Wilson said this did not contradict Mr. Geneen's testimony that his commitment was only \$200,000, because Mr. Wilson was certain he could raise enough money from San Diego businessmen so that the full \$400,000 would not be needed. He said that so much had been raised that only about \$50,000 would be needed from I.T.T.

¶Mr. Wilson said, "To my knowledge there is absolutely no connection between the personal guarantee of underwriting made to me and a subsequent out-of-court settlement of various lawsuits against I.T.T."

¶Mr. Merriam conceded that he probably told Mr. Wilson on Feb. 28 that he had received from Mrs. Beard the memorandum that fell into Mr. Anderson's hands. But he said he had since learned that he could not have received that memo because he had not gone to the office on June 25, the date of the memorandum.

¶Mr. Merriam said that out of fear of Mrs. Beard's wrath, he had falsely told her that he had received an inquiry from the White House about the details of the corporation's San Diego commitment. He said the truth was that he had dealt with the White House through Jack Gleason, a public relations man whom Mrs. Beard dislikes.

At this, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, demanded to know "how I can put credence in your testimony" before the committee. Mr. Merriam insisted that he was not deceiving the committee.