

Cook Admits 5 More Lies Relating to Vesco Inquiry

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George Bradford Cook, one of the Government's chief witnesses, admitted yesterday at the Mitchell-Stans trial that he had lied under oath on three occasions to the grand jury that investigated this case and twice to Congressional committees.

He did it, he said, to protect Maurice H. Stans and also to protect the reputation of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which he headed at the time.

Under cross-examination, Mr. Cook was accused by defense attorneys of having also lied in the White House to Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., President Nixon's chief of staff, and to Leonard Garment, the President's special counsel.

For Mr. Cook it was a day in which he underwent withering cross-examination. He heard himself depicted over and over again as a liar, and was forced to admit that this was so. And he listened to not so veiled hints that he was an ambitious

young man who had subtly tried to blackmail Mr. Stans into helping him further his career in government.

On Thursday, Mr. Cook's second day on the witness stand, he testified under direct examination by the Government that he lied only twice to the grand jury before changing his mind and deciding to tell the truth. He also told of many meetings and conversations with Mr. Stans about the S.E.C.'s investigation of Robert L. Vesco, a financier, who was also indicted in this case, but who has fled the country.

Mr. Cook's testimony Thursday was the first hard testimony of the trial to really tie Mr. Stans in with the alleged crimes in this case. Mr. Stans, former Secretary of Commerce, and John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General, are accused of perjury, obstruction of justice and conspiracy for allegedly attempting to impede an

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S.E.C. investigation of Mr. Vesco in return for a secret \$200,000 cash contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

Perjury About Talks

Mr. Cook's perjury consisted of swearing to the grand jury and to the Congressional committees, among other things, that he had never discussed the S.E.C. investigation of Mr. Vesco with Mr. Stans until after the commission filed a civil fraud suit against the financier on Nov. 27, 1972.

If Mr. Cook had not discussed the investigation with Mr. Stans before that date, then it would be nearly impossible for the Government to convict Mr. Stans of some of the charges against him.

Yesterday Mr. Cook did not recant his testimony of the preceding day. Accordingly, the defense set about assailing his

character and, therefore, his credibility, an exercise that produced the following almost textbook example of courtroom irony:

First, the defense wanted to show that in general Mr. Cook told lies when he testified. To do this, they got him to admit that he had lied before the grand jury and Congress.

However, in doing so, the defense was really trying to uphold Mr. Cook's initial testimony—the testimony he now says he lied about—that, among other things, he had never discussed the Vesco case with Mr. Stans before the formal complaint was filed by the S.E.C.

Move by Prosecution

The other side of the irony is, of course, that the defense wanted to make it appear that now, during this trial, is the time that Mr. Cook is lying. Since Mr. Cook is unshaken in his testimony that he is finally

telling the truth now, the defense had to make the point that if he lied previously, how could he be believed now?

To avoid this trap, and to try to "rehabilitate" the witness, John R. Wing, the chief prosecutor, over strenuous defense objections, was finally allowed by Judge Lee P. Gagliardi to ask Mr. Cook why he had lied to the grand jury and to Congress.

This came after Mr. Cook had literally shouted to Peter Fleming Jr., Mr. Mitchell's lawyer, "but I'm not lying now."

To Mr. Wing the witness later said he had lied, "because of my feelings for Mr. Stans" and "because I did not want to bring dishonor or discredit to the S.E.C., as to the fact that I had these conversations with Mr. Stans."

The harshest attack, however, on Mr. Cook came during the cross-examination conducted by Walter J. Bonner, Mr. Stans' lawyer.



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Edward J. Bonner, lawyer for Maurice H. Stans, left foreground, cross-examining George Bradford Cook, former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, at the Mitchell-Stans trial. Judge Lee P. Gagliardi is at the upper left.