

# Ex-Head of Miami Hospital Faces Forgery Charge

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MIAMI, May 23—Sanford K. Bronstein, former president of a Miami hospital that once drew praise from President Nixon, has been charged with 64 criminal counts in connection with the alleged forging of checks totaling \$525,000.

Dade County State Attorney Richard E. Gerstein announced today that he had filed the charges last night with the Criminal Division of the Dade County Court and said that an international search was on for the suspect.

Mr. Bronstein, former president and chief executive officer of the new bankrupt Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, is charged with conspiracy, grand larceny, forgery and cashing forged checks. Under Florida law, the State Attorney can file charges directly with the courts without convening a grand jury.

#### 4 Others Accused

Conspiracy charges were also filed against four other persons, including Sheldon Turner, Mr. Bronstein's son-in-law. The others were Arthur Tifford, Mr. Bronstein's attorney; Dalton Abbott, a business associate, and Tony Gil Jr., the hospital's internal auditor. All were free today on \$10,000 bail each.

Mr. Gerstein said that Mr. Bronstein had apparently left the country.

Each of the 64 counts against Mr. Bronstein carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Mr. Gerstein, at a news conference, also raised questions about the Federal backing for an expansion of the hospital.

"My office has reason to believe that part of the \$525,000 and other funds totaling perhaps a million dollars more went to Washington to make political payoffs for the purpose of obtaining funds and approval for the Cedars' expansion," he declared.

#### Stood at Nixon's Side

In 1970, Cedars, then a relatively small Miami hospital, received a \$62-million loan guarantee from the Federal Housing Administration for expansion despite opposition from local health experts.

On Feb. 15, Mr. Bronstein stood at the side of President Nixon who then inaugurated a part of the hospital. Mr. Nixon praised Mr. Bronstein and called the hospital a model for his Administration's privately financed national health insurance plan.

But on March 30, Mr. Bronstein, a prominent businessman here and a bank board member, was dismissed from his hospital posts, and the hospital board of trustees accused him of "financial irresponsibility."

On April 15, Cedars petitioned for reorganization

under the Federal bankruptcy law. The hospital, now operated by a court-appointed receiver, has debts totaling more than \$13-million, including \$814,000 it owes the Internal Revenue Service for taxes withheld from its employees.

Mr. Gerstein, the State Attorney, refused to elaborate on the information alleging political payoffs in Washington. He said that this was an area being "vigorously investigated now" and added that his chief investigator, Martin Dardis, was "cooperating fully with a Federal agency" that was also looking into the hospital's affairs.

Mr. Bronstein is being sued by several Miami banks for allegedly failing to repay personal loans totaling about \$750,000. Also, the revenue service has filed liens against his personal property for \$700,000.

Mr. Gerstein said that he had asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the State Department, Interpol and Scotland

Yard to help find Mr. Bronstein.

"I hope he surrenders voluntarily and tells his story," the prosecutor said. "He cannot hide forever."

#### Endorsements Forged

Investigators said that the alleged check-forging scheme began when the minutes of a 1969 meeting of the hospital's board were falsified to record that the hospital had authorized a consulting contract with Onions & Bouchard, an engineering firm in Jamaica and Bermuda.

Pursuant to that "contract,"

between May, 1972, and January, 1974, Mr. Bronstein ordered the issuance of 21 checks of \$25,000 each payable to the firm, Mr. Dardis said.

Endorsements on all of these checks, he added, were forged either directly by Mr. Bronstein or by the Cedars controller, Harold Simonoff. The checks were then cashed at the Midtown Bank of Miami, of which Mr. Bronstein was board member and at other Miami banks, Mr. Dardis said.

Mr. Dardis said that some of the cash had been converted into cashier's checks that he traced to Ireland and Norway.