



UPI Telephoto
JOHN PRIESTES
'I wanted to tell'

A Coverup On Gurney Is Charged

Miami

Watergate minority counsel Fred Thompson kept allegations of influence peddling by Senator Edward Gurney from surfacing in Watergate committee testimony six months ago, a government witness said yesterday.

Miami builder John Priestes, a key witness in the grand jury indictments of Gurney, said when he was called to testify before the Senate Watergate committee last January, Thompson insisted that Priestes not mention money he had allegedly given to Gurney's "slush fund."

Instead, Priestes testified only about a \$25,000 contribution he had made to the Committee to Re-elect the President.

"I wanted to tell the whole story to the committee, but Thompson said 'No way.'"

Priestes was one of a dozen builders a federal grand jury in Jacksonville said Wednesday were solicited for contributions to Gurney's campaign fund by former political aide Larry E. Williams.

The grand jury named Florida's senior senator and Republican Watergate committee member and six other persons in an 11-count indictment charging perjury, conspiracy and bribery in raising the slush fund.

Priestes was one of three key government witnesses whose testimony led to the indictment of the 60-year-old senator. Priestes said he paid a total of \$175,000 in bribes to Williams and former Miami Federal Housing Administration Director William Pelski, a Gurney appointee.

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