

Gurney Contradicted by F.B.I. Agent

NYTimes MAY 29 1975

Special to The New York Times

TAMPA, Fla., May 28—An F.B.I. inspector testified here today that former Senator Edward J. Gurney told him in a 1971 interview that Larry E. Williams, a fund-raiser, worked for him.

David W. Bowers, who is in charge of Congressional liaison for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, also said that during the same interview he told Mr. Gurney, who was then a Senator, that Mr. Williams was being investigated in connection with "bribery" allegations regarding Federal housing agencies.

Mr. Bowers was the 53d prosecution witness at the trial in United States District Court of Mr. Gurney and four others on charges stemming from allegedly illegal campaign fund-raising conducted by Mr. Williams between 1971 and 1973. The trial began on Feb. 24.

Mr. Bowers's testimony conflicted with Mr. Gurney's numerous public statements that Mr. Williams was a volunteer worker, not on his staff, and that he did not learn of Mr. Williams's fund-raising activities until June, 1972. The seven felony charges against Mr. Gurney include four alleging that he lied under oath to a Federal grand jury in Jacksonville on May 13, 1974.

Reading from notes taken

at the time, Mr. Bowers said that he interviewed Mr. Gurney in his Senate office in Washington on Nov. 2, 1971. At that time, the F.B.I. was investigating a complaint from a Gainesville, Fla., builder that Mr. Williams had demanded \$5,000 in exchange for help with a housing project.

At 2:21 P.M., Mr. Bowers read, Mr. Gurney "said Williams does work for him out of Orlando, where he lives."

In earlier testimony, Mr. Williams said that he was interviewed by the F.B.I. in Orlando on Nov. 4, 1971, and then telecopied his statement to Mr. Gurney's office in Washington.

Mr. Williams said that nothing came of that investigation after the Republican Senator talked with the United States Attorney General, John N. Mitchell, on Nov. 6, 1971. That conversation was said to have taken place aboard an Air Force jet taking a number of prominent Republicans to Detroit to a birthday party for the Senate Republican whip, Robert P. Griffin of Michigan.

"The Senator had discussed it with Mr. Mitchell, and Mr. Mitchell had just chuckled about it and told him not to worry about it," Mr. Williams testified. "Mr. Mitchell said he would take care of the matter and for me to go about my business in Florida."

Mr. Bowers said he got in touch with Senator Gurney again on Nov. 30, 1971, to tell him that the F.B.I. investigation had concluded and its findings had been forwarded to the Justice Department. He did not say if any action was taken.

On July 3, 1973, Mr. Bowers said, he received a telephone call from James L. Groot, then Mr. Gurney's administrative assistant in Washington and now one of the defendants at the trial.

"Mr. Groot expressed concern about what the Senator had said, that Larry Williams worked for him," Mr. Bowers recalled. "He said that Williams worked for the Republican party and not for the Senator, and he was concerned about the notation on the file."

The investigation resumed in late 1973, and indictments were eventually returned on July 10, 1974.