

# Trial Of Former Sheriff Goes To Jury Tomorrow

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The racketeering trial of former Sheriff John Maeras of Madison County and two other men will go to the jury tomorrow after three weeks of testimony.

Both sides were to meet today with U.S. District Judge J. Waldo Ackerman at federal court in Alton to go over instructions to the jury.

The defense rested at 3 p.m. Wednesday after calling about a dozen witnesses this week.

Deputy Sheriff John M. Cooper of Madison County and Leland L. Stoller, a professional fund-raiser from Madison, Tenn., also are on trial. Maeras and Stoller testified, but Cooper did not.

The original indictment listed 26 counts against Maeras and Cooper and 21 counts against Stoller, charging them with bribery, obstruction of justice, extortion, fraud, official misconduct and conspiracy.

Two charges of mail fraud and one of obstruction of justice have been dismissed against all three because the prosecution failed to submit proper evidence.

Closing arguments and Ackerman's

instructions are to begin at 9 a.m. tomorrow. The prosecution placed 50 witnesses on the stand during the trial.

On Wednesday, Stoller denied allegations that he kicked back money to Maeras. He said he did nothing improper while raising money for the Madison County Deputy Sheriff's Association over a five-year period beginning in 1971.

Stoller said the association grossed about \$250,000 during that period. He said the association got 25 percent; by the time expenses were subtracted, Stoller said he ended up with 15 to 20 percent.

Gary Burns, a former deputy, testified that he had received payoffs from Stoller to be delivered to Maeras. He said the kickbacks allowed Stoller to continue as the association's fund-raiser.

But Maeras said he had nothing to do with the Sheriff's Association. Maeras said the only money he got from Stoller was a \$300 political contribution. Stoller testified that he gave that money to Burns to deliver to Maeras.

When asked whether he had conspired with Maeras or Cooper to commit any crimes, Stoller answered, "No, sir."

## Local

*Stupid office that  
Betsy LeBaron for.*

**GREEN PASTURES:** A federal appeals panel here has affirmed a district judge's ruling that Edison Bros. Stores Inc. of St. Louis must pay pension benefits to two men fired in 1976 for taking kickbacks from vendors. The appeals panel rejected Wednesday arguments that Joseph M. Fingerhut and Henry Winer had forfeited benefits by violating the "bad boy" clause of the pension agreement. The court held that the two are protected by the Employment Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

**UNLEASHING A BURDEN:** St. Louis soon may hire out its dog catching, says Mayor Jim Conway. A task force recommended Wednesday the elimination of the city's 20-man force. Conway endorsed the idea, and said the city would seek bids. So far, only the Humane Society of Missouri has expressed interest. The group wants \$443,000 a year, slightly more than what the city now spends. But the society would house the dogs, sparing the city the cost of repairing its antiquated pound. And the society would spare the mayor's office some heat; Conway called dog catching the city's biggest source of complaints.

**COLORADO'S WITNESS:** Police Sgt. Elmer Kavanaugh of St. Louis agreed Wednesday to testify in Pueblo, Colo., before a grand jury looking into alleged underworld influence in the Police Department there. Kavanaugh had resisted the subpoena. Two years ago, he applied to be Pueblo police chief with the encouragement of Curtis Kopman of Chesterfield, reported to be an associate of organized crime figures. Kopman is continuing to fight subpoenas from Colorado.





**IRATE TAXPAYERS:** Ron Elfrink of the Organizing Committee for Eastern Madison County bringing chairs for an overflow crowd at a public hearing Wednesday in Hamel of the Illinois

House Revenue Committee. The residents assailed county reassessment practices and urged changes, including election of the supervisor of assessments. (Post-Dispatch Photo by Jim Baird)