

FROM THE BELL SYNDICATE, INC.--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

DREW PEARSON

ON

THE WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND

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DREW PEARSON SAYS: (CAPS) SENATOR HUNT WAS THREATENED WITH PROSECUTION OF HIS SON UNLESS HE WITHDREW FROM SENATE RACE; HUNT BROODED OVER SON'S MISFORTUNES; NEW PRESSURE TECHNIQUES USED IN SENATE.

(END CAPS)

WASHINGTON.--SEN. LESTER HUNT OF WYOMING, WHO ENDED HIS LIFE WITH A RIFLE BULLET LAST WEEK, ~~HAD BEEN LIVING UNDER THE FEAR OF POLITICAL BLACKMAIL~~ IN CONNECTION WITH HIS SON.

ON ONE OCCASION, REPUBLICAN SEN. HERMAN WELKER OF IDAHO HAD SENT WORD TO HUNT THAT IF HE WOULD NOT RUN FOR RE-ELECTION, HIS SON, ARRESTED ON A MORALS CHARGE, WOULD NOT BE PROSECUTED.

FOR MONTHS SENATOR HUNT LIVED UNDER THE SHADOW OF THIS THREAT, SUFFERING FROM THE SHAME OF SOMETHING THAT WAS NOT HIS DOING. LAST DECEMBER HE TOLD THIS COLUMN THAT FOR A LONG TIME HE WOULD NOT GO DOWN TO THE SENATE RESTAURANT TO EAT WITH OTHER SENATORS, BUT HAD LUNCH SENT UP TO HIS OFFICE WHERE HE ATE ALONE.

THE INCIDENT WAS ONE OF THE LOWEST TYPES OF POLITICAL PRESSURE THIS WRITER HAS SEEN IN MANY YEARS AND ILLUSTRATES THE LENGTHS TO WHICH CERTAIN REPUBLICANS WILL GO TO CAPTURE ONE SEAT IN THE NARROWLY BALANCED SENATE.

IT ALSO ILLUSTRATES THE NEW TECHNIQUE USED BY CERTAIN MCCARTHYITES TO PRESSURE OTHER SENATORS, SUCH AS ROY COHN'S THREAT AGAINST SENATOR HENRY JACKSON OF WASHINGTON, AND THE INDIRECT THREAT AIMED AT SENATOR SYMINGTON OF MISSOURI.

THIS WRITER HAD KNOWN OF THE THREAT AGAINST SENATOR HUNT AS EARLY AS LAST DECEMBER, BUT BECAUSE THE SENATOR SEEMED SO EMOTIONALLY UPSET, I DID NOT REPORT THE PRESSURE USED BY SENATOR WELKER TO MAKE HIM WITHDRAW FROM THE SENATE RACE. PERHAPS IF I HAD BROUGHT THE WHOLE THING INTO THE HEALTHY LIGHT OF DAY, SENATOR HUNT MIGHT HAVE READJUSTED HIMSELF SOME TIME AGO AND MIGHT BE ALIVE TODAY.

--MODEST MAN--

I HAD FIRST MET HUNT WHEN HE WAS GOVERNOR OF WYOMING AND CLIMBED ABOARD THE FRIENDSHIP TRAIN EIGHT YEARS AGO AS IT REACHED THE WESTERN END OF HIS STATE. HE RODE WITH US UNTIL WE ARRIVED IN CHEYENNE. A QUIET, UNASSUMING PERSON, HUNT HAD COME TO WYOMING FIRST AS A BASEBALL PLAYER, THEN SETTLED DOWN TO PRACTICE DENTISTRY IN LANDER UP NEAR THE SHOSHONE INDIAN RESERVATION.

(MORE)

IN THE SENATE, HE COULD ALWAYS BE FOUND VOTING ON THE SIDE OF THE UNDERDOG, AND THOUGH HE WAS NOT AS VOCAL AS SENATOR TOBEY, HE DID A FINE, CONSCIENTIOUS JOB AS A MEMBER OF THE KEFAUVER COMMITTEE WHICH INVESTIGATED CRIME.

THE WORLD BEGAN TO COME TO AN END FOR SENATOR HUNT WHEN, LAST YEAR, HIS SON WAS ARRESTED IN LAFAYETTE PARK ON A MORALS CHARGE. SINCE IT WAS A FIRST OFFENSE, HE WAS CHARGED WITH A MISDEMEANOR, AND THE SENATOR WAS ASKED BY THE WASHINGTON POLICE TO WORK WITH HIS SON TO STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT.

THE CHARGE LAY ON THE POLICE RECORD AND FOR THE TIME BEING WAS NOT PROSECUTED.

THEN SUDDENLY, SENATOR WELKER TELEPHONED A MUTUAL FRIEND OF HUNT'S IN WYOMING, STATING THAT IF HUNT WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE SENATE RACE, HIS SON WOULD NOT BE PROSECUTED.

HUNT, A DEMOCRAT, WAS EXTREMELY POPULAR IN WYOMING AND SURE OF RE-ELECTION. HIS TERM WAS TO EXPIRE THIS YEAR, AND IF HE WITHDREW, A REPUBLICAN WAS REASONABLY SURE OF ELECTION, THUS GIVING THE REPUBLICANS A BETTER CHANCE TO CONTROL THE SENATE.

THE WELKER MESSAGE WAS RELAYED TO HUNT THROUGH HIS CLOSE FRIENDS TRACY MCCRACKEN, DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN FROM WYOMING AND JOE O'MAHONEY, EX-SENATOR FROM WYOMING.

HUNT TOLD THIS COLUMN LAST DECEMBER THAT WHEN HE GOT THE MESSAGE HE AND MRS. HUNT DEBATED IT FOR A WEEK, THEN DECIDED THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE WANTED TO PROTECT HIS SON, HE WOULD NOT BE BLACKMAILED OUT OF PUBLIC OFFICE. SO HE SENT WORD THAT HE WOULD NOT WITHDRAW.

--TERRIBLE ORDEAL--

ONE DAY LATER, THE WASHINGTON TIMES-HERALD, THEN OWNED BY COL. ROBERT MCCORMICK, FEATURED THE STORY OF HIS SON'S MORALS CHARGE ON PAGE ONE, AND IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER INSPECTOR ROY BLICK, HEAD OF THE D.C. VICE SQUAD WAS CALLED TO CAPITOL HILL.

SENATOR HUNT TOLD THIS COLUMN THAT BLICK LATER REPORTED TO HIM THAT WELKER AND SENATOR BRIDGES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, CHAIRMAN OF THE POWERFUL SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HAD HANDED HIM AN ENVELOPE AND TOLD HIM TO READ THE CONTENTS.

BLICK DID SO AND FOUND THE ENVELOPE CONTAINED HIS RESIGNATION. HE ASKED WHAT IT MEANT. THE SENATORS TOLD HIM TO SIGN IT.

THEY WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THAT WAS WHAT HAPPENED WHEN A POLICE OFFICER FAILED TO PROSECUTE, AS IN THE HUNT BOY'S CASE.

BLICK EXPLAINED THAT WHERE A YOUNGSTER WAS CONNECTED WITH A CHURCH, AS IN THE CASE OF THE HUNT BOY WHO WAS STUDYING FOR THE MINISTRY, THE USUAL POLICE PRACTICE WAS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HIS CHURCH AND HIS PARENTS AND GET HIM STRAIGHTENED OUT WITHOUT PROSECUTION, ESPECIALLY IF HE WAS A FIRST OFFENDER.

(MORE)

BUT SENATOR WELKER SAID THAT IF THERE WAS NO PROSECUTION HE MIGHT FEEL CONSTRAINED TO MAKE A SPEECH ON THE SENATE FLOOR.

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, YOUNG HUNT WAS BROUGHT TO TRIAL. ORDERS WERE GIVEN IN THE U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TO PUSH THE PROSECUTION. SENATOR HUNT SAT IN COURT THROUGHOUT THE TRIAL. HE LOOKED AS IF HE WAS ALMOST DYING BEFORE MEN'S EYES.

THE POLICEMAN WHO ARRESTED YOUNG HUNT HAD MADE NO ARRESTS THAT DAY, AND SOME ATTORNEYS HAVE CHARGED PLAINCLOTHESMEN WITH UNFAIRLY TRYING TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF THEIR ARRESTS. ONE ATTORNEY FAMILIAR WITH D.C. CRIMINAL PROCEDURE WHO WATCHED THE PROCEEDINGS TOLD ME THAT THE BOY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ACQUITTED ON THE GROUND THAT THE PLAINCLOTHESMAN WHOM YOUNG HUNT WAS CHARGED WITH SOLICITING, ACTUALLY HAD DONE THE SOLICITING HIMSELF. BUT THE PROSECUTION WAS VIGOROUS AND THE VERDICT WENT AGAINST THE HUNT BOY.

MRS. HUNT, THE SENATOR SAID LATER, HARDLY SURVIVED THE TRIAL. SHE DIDN'T EAT FOR A WEEK.

"IF THE OPPOSITION BRINGS THIS UP IN THE SENATE RACE," HE TOLD THIS COLUMN, "I SHALL WITHDRAW."

THE ABOVE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE IN LATE DECEMBER. THE SENATOR AT THAT TIME SAID HE COULD NOT BEAR TO FACE HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE SENATE. HE DOUBTED IF HE WOULD EVEN APPEAR ON THE SENATE FLOOR. HIS HAIR HAD TURNED ALMOST WHITE. HIS FACE WAS PALE. WE URGED HIM NOT TO AVOID PEOPLE, TOLD HIM THAT PUBLIC SYMPATHY WAS WITH HIM. EVENTUALLY HE GOT AROUND MORE, SEEMED TO BE MORE HIS OLD SELF.

THEN TWO WEEKS AGO HE WENT TO THE HOSPITAL FOR A PHYSICAL CHECK AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT RUN AGAIN. IT WAS NO SECRET THAT HE HAD BEEN HAVING KIDNEY TROUBLE FOR SOME TIME. BUT I AM SURE THAT ON TOP OF THIS, LESTER HUNT, A MUCH MORE SENSITIVE SOUL THAN HIS COLLEAGUES REALIZED, JUST COULD NOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF HAVING HIS SON'S MISFORTUNES BECOME THE SUBJECT OF WHISPERS IN HIS RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

THOSE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE WORRIES THAT TROUBLED SENATOR HUNT AS HE LEFT HIS HOME EARLY THE OTHER MORNING, A .22 RIFLE HALF HIDDEN UNDER HIS COAT.

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