

Sloan Claims Innocence On Union Embezzlement, Fraud Charges

BY SUSAN USHER
Maintaining he is innocent, Willie E. Sloan of Leland announced his intent last week to continue as president of the International Longshoreman's Association local in Wilmington last week following his arrest by the FBI on alleged federal labor law violations and embezzlement of union funds.

Sloan, 52, surrendered voluntarily to FBI agents last Thursday. He is president of ILA Local No. 1426 and a former Brunswick County commissioner, having served from December 1974 until December 1978. He has been president of the local for approximately 14 years.

In a prepared statement, Sloan responded to the 10-count indictment by stating that he is "ready and anxious" to defend the charges, which he said are unfounded and stem from "bitter rivalries" within the union leadership.

"Political rivals of mine within Local No. 1426 have decided that since they are unable to take control of the union because of a lack of support within its members, they will attempt to destroy me" using lies and distortions, according to his statement.

Sloan was released under an unsecured bond of \$100,000 after appearing before U.S. Magistrate William Norton Mason.

According to U.S. Attorney James R. Dedrick, the indictment followed an investigation by the FBI and by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Labor Racketeering. It alleges violations of the Taft-Hartley Act, embezzlement and misapplication of union funds, and defrauding the union membership of their right to the honest services as their union president.

The Taft-Hartley Act regulates collective bargaining agreements for unions. The alleged violation of that act revolves around an alleged conflict of interest related to Sloan's ownership in and control of SRACCO Inc., a Route 2, Leland-based trucking firm that transported grapefruit from Cape Fear Bonded Warehouse in Wilmington to ships docked at the North Carolina State Port in Wilmington during the 1986-

87 and 1987-88 grapefruit seasons. Sloan was a director of and registered agent for the firm.

Typically the union approves a collective bargaining agreement with a shipping company, then uses a rotation system that gives each union longshoreman a fair opportunity to obtain work. Longshoremen typically load and unload cargo or shipping containers.

According to the indictment, Sloan deviated from the work rules of the agreement then in effect for the purpose of obtaining the trucking contract with Sea Gal Express Inc. and Baltic-American Lines. He allowed the two firms to hire certain members of the union on a permanent basis at the same time SRACCO Inc. had a trucking contract with the corporations. The alleged action deprived other union members of the opportunity to be so employed.

Between approximately December 1986 and May 1988, Sloan allegedly received monetary payments and other things of value totaling \$114,850 from an employer and persons acting in the interest of an employer.

A mail fraud charge concerns a number of allegations, including one that Sloan improperly manipulated a recent union election to perpetuate his control of the union "so that he could utilize his office to further his personal gain and private business."

Sloan was elected to a fifth term as president on Oct. 8, 1991, amidst argument over his proposal to enlarge union membership. He was challenged by union member William Freeman.

The indictment alleges that around Oct. 1, 1991, Sloan sent through the mail a notice of the union election scheduled Oct. 8.

Other alleged illegal efforts to defraud the union include threatening members with loss of work, providing supporters with work in violation of the local's work rules and making unauthorized payments to or on behalf of supporters, improperly excluding new members to continue his control.

The alleged misapplications or embezzlement of union funds were as follows:

■ One count of using \$9,000 in union money between Sept. 26, 1991, and Nov. 23, 1992, to obtain furniture for his personal use.

■ Three counts of collecting three weeks of vacation pay to which he was not legally entitled, \$1,500 in December 1988, \$1,384 in December 1989 and \$1,360 in December 1990.

■ Two counts of spending unauthorized union travel money to take other union members to union conferences. The indictment says that Sloan spent \$510 on May 27, 1992, for union member Luther Jordan, who was elected to the state Senate in November, to travel with him. On Sept. 27, 1991, he allegedly spent approximately the same amount of unauthorized travel funds to take John McCoy to a conference.

■ One count of obtaining unauthorized payment of \$668.85 in union money for a fence for a relative, Henry Sloan.

■ One count of obtaining unauthorized payment of \$1,767.50 to obtain T-shirts, which were supplied to Local No. 1426 by Mr. Joe's Logos.

The maximum penalty for each of the 10 counts, upon conviction, would be five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, with a supervised release term of three years.

According to Sloan, any expenditures were authorized either by the local's membership or its executive board, with documentation in union records. He said he has never taken funds for person use other than those to which he is entitled or allowed them to be used for purposes other than to benefit the union.

Sloan wrote in his statement, "As I have done nothing but work hard to bring success and pride to my union and family, I have no doubt that when I am judged by my peers and both sides of this matter are heard that I will be found innocent of these charges."

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Hilts Deployed On Carrier

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Christopher S. Hilts, son of Donna M. Doling of Leland, recently deployed aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt Battle Group.

The group will relieve the carrier USS John F. Kennedy Battle Group which deployed in October 1992.

The 1983 graduate of Herkimer High School, Herkimer, N.Y., joined the Navy in May 1985.

rived for duty at Fort Bragg.

Bush's wife Bichson is the daughter of Henry and Tam Stevenson of Southport.

An adjutant, he is the son of Charlie O. and Vera A. Bush of Colquitt, Ga.

The captain is a 1973 graduate of Miller County High School, Colquitt, and a 1984 graduate of Albany State College, Ga.

Reports To Ft. Bragg

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