

Patterson, state battle for utility case control

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

It looked a little like a prize fight. But duking it out in Oakland County Circuit Court were the local prosecutor and the state attorney general, with a judge refereeing.

The stakes? A chance to represent the people of Michigan in a utility fraud case. The case became an issue in the 1982 election when his opponent alleged Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson backed off the case because of campaign contributions by auto dealers whose meters were altered.

The prosecutor considers the case closed. If the judge grants a motion leading to a state role, his decision could lead to prosecution of business owners whose meters were altered to cut utility costs.

"WE CAN'T HAVE two attorneys speaking for one client — the people of

Michigan," insisted Robert Ianni, head of the attorney general's criminal division.

"The attorney general is the exclusive representative of the people," he said. "This is the attorney general speaking on behalf of the people of this state, your honor."

Disagreeing strongly was Oakland County chief assistant prosecutor Richard Thompson. He argued against the state intervening in 114-year-old case of People of the State of Michigan vs. William Harold Jones.

"As far as I'm concerned, the only proper attorney representing the people of the state of Michigan is the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office," Thompson said.

"We may as well have someone from Mars here. They (the state attorney general's office) are not properly in this case."

FILED JOINTLY by the attorney general's office and William H. Jones

of Taylor, the new motion asks Oakland County Circuit Judge George LaPlata to amend the plea Jones made May 12, 1983.

The Taylor man, who admittedly altered meters to cut utility costs, originally pleaded guilty to obtaining more than \$100 under false pretenses. Now on probation, Jones wants to change his plea to conspiracy to defraud. LaPlata is expected to rule next week.

Jones said he agreed to the false pretenses charge out of fear of further prosecution by the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, with which he was cooperating.

Named in the motion to amend the plea is William Cook, who owns Bill Cook Buick Inc. in Farmington Hills. During the hearing, Jones said he cut Cook's dealership electric bill to \$8.39 a month.

JONES SAID he also slowed the electric meter at Bob Saks Olds, Farm-

ington Hills. Owner Robert (Saks) Mechigan is being prosecuted in Wayne County in another utility fraud case.

The prosecutor's office contends Jones is an unreliable witness and they can not base cases against others on his testimony. In last week's proceedings, Jones admitted that he lied under oath during his plea hearing.

Michigan State Police asked the state attorney general to look into the case further. Two car dealers are being charged by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

Thompson said the attorney general's office wants to "clean up" Jones for its own purposes. "There is no miscarriage of justice. This is a sham to make their witness more credible."

The attorney general's office said it wants to see Jones get the proper sentence. When questioned by LaPlata about his unusual position, Ianni said, "We are confessing error. We agree with him (Jones) a mistake was made."

"William Cook was a willing accomplice, so it was conspiracy."

JONES' ATTORNEY expressed concern over who would handle the case — the attorney general or prosecutor. Taylor lawyer Wally Winters said he would appeal the case if it is not run by state lawyers.

"Who is going to call the shots — the attorney general or prosecutor's office?" he asked LaPlata. "At this time, we do not want to expose this particular defendant to the Oakland County Prosecutor's office."

While examining Jones, Thompson said amending the plea would leave the defendant without a sentence. He suggested it also could mean more charges

filed against him — without the protection of the "no jail" agreement he has made with the prosecutor.

"ARE YOU willing to let us prosecute you on the original charge?" Thompson asked. After Jones said "Sure," the chief assistant prosecutor added "I think you should be aware I we take away the agreement, there is no agreement."

"This is exactly what I was trying to avoid," objected Winters on behalf of Jones.

The court could just set aside the plea, LaPlata said. "Nothing has happened to him (Jones). If he faced the original charge, I'm just granting him the relief he asked for."

GE expands robotics center

General Electric Corp. is expanding the scope in its Robotics and Vision Application Center in Troy. GE will make it the focal point for a wide variety of industrial automation products and services for the automotive industry.

The center will be renamed the General Electric Automation Center to reflect its expanded role.

"This action is being taken in response to the automotive industry's increasing demand for the integration of automation products," said M.S. Richardson, vice president and general manager of GE's Factory Automation Products Division, which is headquartered in Charlotteville, Va.

SOME 30 GE manufacturing automation sales and application profes-

sionals will move from their Southfield location to the GE Automation Center in January. The Troy facility already has a staff of about 25.

More application engineering specialists will be added as GE steps up its effort to capture a larger share of the automation market in the Midwest, a company spokesman said.

"As we win a larger share of the market, we will add engineering specialists. But I don't know those numbers right now," said Dan Hrisak of GE's news office.

GE's Automation Center will include products and services from the following companies: General Purpose Control Department, Bloomington, Ill.; Automation Control Department, Char-

lottesville, Va.; Speed Variator Products Operation, Erie, Pa.; Robotics & Vision Systems Department, Orlando, Fla.; Calma Milipat, Calif.; Coherent General, Palo Alto, Calif.; and Industrial Automation Systems Department, Charlottesville, Va.

Hrisak said the Troy facility would be something of a showplace for customers as lasers and exotic products are moved in.

"General Electric is dedicated to being a leader in automation, both as a supplier and as a user," said Richardson. "Coupled with the GE Plastics Application Development Center in South-

field, General Electric has clearly demonstrated its long-term commitment to helping the automotive industry modernize."

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THE FACILITY, at 550 Oliver, was opened in November 1982. Until now it has provided applications engineering and training primarily to customers of GE robotics and intelligent vision systems.

The center has robots for welding, spraying, and material handling applications which can be demonstrated in a working environment, as well as factory vision systems which can guide a robot arm or be used for stand-alone test and inspection.

Other automation products include GE programmable controllers, and Calma computer-aided design systems.

Chrysler aids African fund

Chrysler Corp. donated \$25,000 for relief aid to famine victims in Africa.

"We are shocked and alarmed by the human suffering in Ethiopia and some other African countries," said Michael M. Glusac, Chrysler director of government affairs. Glusac presented the \$25,000 check to Anthony J. Vinci, chairman of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross.

The Chrysler contribution brings the

amount received to date by the Southeastern Michigan Chapter to \$113,500.

Other organizations interested in helping in the African relief campaign should make checks payable to the American Red Cross, "African Relief," and mailed to the Executive Office, Southeastern Michigan Chapter, American Red Cross, P.O. Box 351, Detroit 48232.

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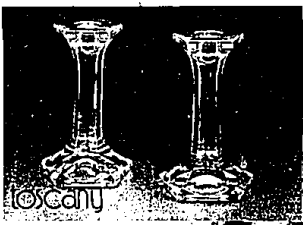
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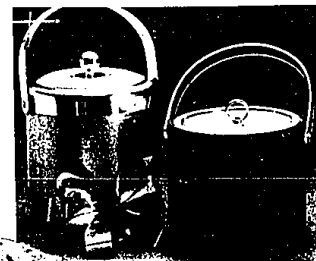
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