



Jack Hood



Don Eldridge



Leroy M. Hittle



Garland Sponburgh

# State Liquor Board members are indicted

By LOU CORSALETTI, DEE NORTON and JOHN WILSON

The three members of the State Liquor Control Board and a former chairman of the board stood charged today with grand larceny and fraudulent appropriation of alcoholic beverages.

The charges are contained in a county-grand-jury indictment made public yesterday.

The board members are Jack Hood, chairman; Leroy Hittle, and Don Eldridge. The former board member is Garland Sponburgh.

A third charge names only Hittle, Hood and Eldridge. It accuses them of using their positions to obtain special privileges—obtaining quantities of alcoholic beverages “without cost to themselves.”

The indictments were made public after Presiding Superior Court Judge James Mifflin issued an order quashing the arrest warrants of Hood, Hittle and Eldridge and directing that summonses be issued to them instead. This means the board members will not have to submit to booking in jail.

It was learned later in the day that Lts. Dick Christie and Richard Rebman, county police officers assigned to serve the warrants on the Liquor Board members, were called back to Seattle by radio before they reached Olympia.

A county officer said he

received word that the quash order had been issued before the secret indictment had been made public and warrants served.

Sponburgh is believed to be in Chicago. He and the three present board members all testified before the grand jury.

Grand larceny is punishable by up to 15 years in prison. The indictment accuses the four of grand larceny involving liquor “with intent to deprive and defraud” the Liquor Board and state.

The maximum penalty for fraudulent appropriation is 10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Illegally using official position to obtain special privilege is a gross misdemeanor. It carries a one-year maximum jail term.

The first count of the indictment states the four defendants “did then and there secrete, withhold and appropriate the same (liquor) to their own use and to the use of persons other than true owner or the person entitled . . . and against the peace and dignity of the State of Washington.”

The second count specifies that the four men misappropriated property “entrusted to them by virtue of their offices as members of the Washington State Liquor Control Board, to wit: alcoholic beverages and containers for alcoholic beverages.”

The third count says Hood, Hittle and Eldridge “did willfully, knowingly, intentionally and unlawfully use

their positions as members” of the Liquor Board “to secure special privileges for themselves and their spouses, to wit: by obtaining quantities of alcoholic beverages and containers for alcoholic beverages without cost to themselves or their spouses . . .”

The four were among 14 persons indicted by the county grand jury as it finished its work Tuesday night.

**CONTROVERSY** began developing around the state liquor operation in 1969 with reports about the disappearance of large amounts of liquor from the state's large warehouse in Seattle.

Separate investigations were begun by the State Liquor Control Board and Seattle police. The police presented their findings to Prosecutor Bayley who, in turn, presented information to the grand jury this year.

Two recent articles by The Times shed light on some of the practices that were being carried out.

The first article told how the board furnished free liquor to Gov. Dan Evans. Evans said he used the liquor for official functions at the mansion.

Evans said furnishing free liquor to the mansion, a common practice for years, was ordered stopped when he first took office in 1965. Evans said he began accepting the free liquor after he found how expensive it was to entertain guests.

Officials said the free liquor was samples supplied to the board by distilleries seeking board approval for stocking the submitted brands in state liquor stores.

After the article was published Hood said no more free liquor would go to the mansion.

The second article told how more than 40,000 bottles of free liquor flowed out of the Seattle warehouse during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1970.

**REPORTERS** also discovered it had been a practice for board members to take any type of liquor out of stock and write it off as a sample.

Hood, pressed by reporters as to what the board had done with its share of the free liquor answered angrily:

“It isn't anybody's business.”

More than 3,500 bottles were listed as going directly to the board while 36,500 other free bottles went to 74 men who represent the distilleries that do business with the state.

Hood said he didn't know what happen to the 36,500 bottles other than to “assume they consume them.”

The liquor representatives told State Auditor Robert Graham that the free liquor was used for “routine business purposes.”

Earlier this year Graham issued an audit report that delved into free liquor. Several key legislators have said the issue will be reviewed by the next Legislature.

**ALL THREE** present members of the board were appointed by Evans.

Hood was named to the board in 1968, filling the vacancy caused by the death of Albert C. Thompson, Jr.

Hood had been serving as state banking supervisor, a post to which he had been named by Evans.

Prior to becoming banking supervisor in 1965, Hood served four two-year terms in the House of Representatives as a Republican from Whatcom County.

Previously Hood was a banker in Ferndale, Whatcom County.

**ELDRIDGE** was named to the board in January, 1970, replacing Garland Sponburgh.

Eldridge was speaker of the House of Representatives at the time.

A legislator 18 years, Eldridge drew praise from both sides of the political aisle when he was confirmed by the State Senate unanimously.

Eldridge, a Republican, was from Mount Vernon.

**HITTLE**, a longtime correspondent in Olympia for the Associated Press, became a board member in April, 1967.

Sponburgh, a retired Coast Guard commander, had been appointed to the board in 1961 by former Gov. Albert Rosellini. Sponburgh was a member of the State World's Fair Commission and had headed the State Safety Council.

Board members are paid \$18,000 a year.