

Wayne Barrett, *Freedom to Steal, Why Politicians Never go to Jail*, New York Magazine, February 4, 1980: Crooked politicians have nothing to fear in New York. Contrary to much of the post-Watergate anti-corruption ballyhoo, the three United States attorneys who have served in Foley Square for the last ten years have failed to make a single case against a crooked politician within their jurisdiction. As astounding as it may seem, not since the legendary Carmine DeSapio was convicted back in 1969 for bribery has a top politician or any of the thousands of public officials in the Southern District's territory -- Manhattan, the Bronx, and Westchester -- found himself in handcuffs. It is uncertain whether this pattern of timidity on the part of the politically appointed prosecutors will change now that John S. Martin has been designated by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan to replace Robert B. Fiske in the prestigious post...

* * *

The failure on the part of the federal prosecutors in the Southern District to involve themselves in political-corruption cases is one of the most fascinating, if unspoken, mysteries in city government. The end of Fiske's term, in March will, in fact, conclude a ten-year period in which Nixon- and Ford-appointed U.S. Attorneys have presided over the transformation of the Southern District into a red-light district for political corruption.

* * *

The description of all political-corruption cases handled during the first three years of Fiske's term consumes only 6 of the 187 pages enumerating major cases in the U.S. attorney's annual reports.

* * *

[T]he former WNEW-TV reporter who broke much of the Velez story, recalls numerous meetings with Weinberg and Fiske. "Once I know I brought them absolute, cold evidence of a crime," he said... but nothing happened.

* * *

Charges of campaign-finance irregularities had been made [against Al DelBello] ...Fiske closed it [the grand jury] four months after he opened it... [and] sharply limited this inquiry... Fiske's office terminated an eight-month probe of the city's most political bank. Jack Newfield's recent piece on Staten Island Congressman Murphy in the Village Voice centers on an alleged \$50,000 bribe... [It] has now been quietly closed without result.

* * *

Then U.S. Senator James Buckley delayed Fiske's appointment for several weeks because of his concern that Fiske's long-standing connections to Morgan Guaranty, one of the city's six major banks... Fiske did not "recuse" - the legal term for withdrawing... *** Nonetheless, six months after the SEC final report, Fiske released a one-page statement closing the securities case...

There are a number of other cases, reported in the media, that have been covered by Southern District silence and inactivity...

* * *

Agents from various federal departments say they prefer to work with assistants from other offices where assistants are closer to the streets and more willing to work with agents as partners... **Fiske, for example, has a hard-and-fast rule that assistants are not to do field work with agents**, a rule that has no parallel in other, neighboring federal districts. The price we all pay for these relationships and priorities is a federal jurisdiction where official corruption appears legally impenetrable.