

PROBLEMS LOOM FOR WIFE OF EX-CHIEF SHE MAY GET HOUSE, PART OF HIS PENSION IF GOVERNMENT COLLECTS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, August 29, 1992

Author: JOE SWICKAR Free Press Staff Writer

Laura Hart, steadfast **wife of** disgraced former Detroit police Chief William Hart, will face major **problems** as the federal government goes after the \$2.3 million her husband was convicted **of** stealing from the city.

The chief's **wife** -- who sat faithfully through a trial that featured a parade **of** witnesses detailing her husband's lavish philandering with a series **of** women -- probably will be left with a modest pension and the roof over her head, but not much more.

"I don't know what the government is likely to do with regards to Mrs. Hart," said Thomas Cranmer, Hart's lawyer. "But, you would have to expect them to continue the aggressive approach they have shown throughout this case."

In sentencing Hart to a 10-year prison term **for** looting the police secret service fund, U.S. District Judge Paul Gadola on Thursday also ordered Hart to repay all the embezzled money.

He set the amount at \$2,347,710.90, "due forthwith," and directed federal authorities to seize Hart's assets toward the debt, including any uncollected pay from the city **for** unused sickness or vacation time.

Gadola said Laura Hart "will be heard" in connection with any seizures.

Privately, federal authorities said they will pursue the money vigorously, but that they have no desire to impoverish her.

"She wasn't charged with any crime," said one ranking official. "But we are going to follow the judge's order."

Cranmer also said the conviction on tax evasion charges raises more woes **for** the family. The IRS figures Hart owes \$295,513.35 on his unreported income from the secret service fund. The amount does not include penalties and interest.

Until his indictment, the 68-year-old Hart and his **wife of** 41 years could have looked forward to a comfortable retirement with his \$53,000 annual pension and more than \$150,000 he was due in back pay. The couple have two grown children and own a modest bungalow on St. Aubin Street in Detroit and a waterfront cottage in Ontario.

Detroit defense lawyer James Howarth said the Harts' homes are protected from seizure because they are jointly owned, and joint assets cannot be seized to repay the debts **of** only one owner.

"But, other than the house, she has major league **problems** ," Howarth said.

He said Laura Hart probably will have a right to half **of** the chief's \$53,000 pension, but his back pay is ripe **for** federal pickings.

"It's right there and it's easy **for** them to snatch," Howarth said.

He said federal court fines and seizures often are unenforced, "but you have to remember this is a high-profile case. And the feds can play hardball."

Caption: Photo

: Laura Hart ***

Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: WILLIAM HART ; LAURA HART ; FINANCE ; TAX ; PENSION

Record Number: 9202010764

Copyright (c) 1992 Detroit Free Press