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**Some jurors suspected Edgar played role**

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SPRINGFIELD-Some jurors contacted after the MSI verdict said they had difficulty believing that Gov. Edgar himself did not play some role in Management Services of Illinois' dealings with the state.

Edgar, the first sitting governor to testify in a criminal matter in 75 years, had told jurors that state contracts within his administration are not for sale and that he could not recall specifics about a 1994 dinner with Michael Martin, William Ladd and others at MSI who pledged $ 40,000 to Edgar's re-election.

"Our understanding was that Martin was one of the governor's biggest contributors," said juror Linda Richards of Jacksonville. "How could the governor not remember that?"

"I think he was going around in circles," said another juror, Margaret Davidson of Springfield. "I think they're all in cahoots, from the governor to Robert Wright to Mike Belletire."

According to testimony in the trial, Public Aid Director Wright and former Edgar deputy chief of staff Belletire were said to have "dictated" terms of MSI's Public Aid contract. Neither has been charged.

Edgar, who is not accused of wrongdoing, could not be reached for reaction to Saturday's verdicts. But press secretary Thomas Hardy said the jury's verdict was the product, in part, of quick action by the governor's office to launch an investigation into MSI in May, 1995.

To bolster that argument, Hardy released the contents of a four-paragraph anonymous letter sent to Edgar's office, which contained allegations that ex-Public Aid supervisor Ron Lowder allowed Martin to pay for a trip to Germany, then "helped Martin's company's contract get more money."

"Jim Edgar will not tolerate those who would betray the public trust in order to steal tax dollars," Hardy said.