

# Club Owner Is Criticized By Martin

By MURRAY CHASS

Billy Martin spoke out yesterday for the first time since he was dismissed as Yankee manager and was particularly critical of his former boss, George Steinbrenner.

"I do not want or need any more of George Steinbrenner's so-called help," Martin said in a statement issued by his agent, Doug Newton. "He should not be allowed to run my life anymore or to interfere with my future in baseball. I will always love baseball and I want the fans to know I will be back."

Martin was out of town and had declined to make any comment about his situation. Newton released Martin's statement by telephone in New York and added his own remarks about Martin's financial condition and Steinbrenner.

"I have read and heard a lot of things about myself in the past several days which are not true and have hurt me very much," Martin's statement continued. "I'm in touch with the offices of the Commissioner of Baseball and the President of the American League, and at my request will be meeting with them to discuss each and every statement and circumstance leading up to and following my firing. I have nothing to hide."

Martin's incident with an Illinois salesman in Bloomington, Minn., is under investigation by Commissioner Bowie Kuhn. Kuhn had said he hoped to end the investigation by today, but Newton said Martin would meet with the commissioner next week.

In a nationally televised interview on ABC's "Monday Night Football," Kuhn mentioned Martin's "financial problems" as being part of the former manager's overall problems. Newton, however, took strong exception to the idea that the 51-year-old owner of Billy Martin's Western Wear shop in Man-

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# Martin Criticizes Steinbrenner

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hattan was undergoing financial difficulties.

"As his agent and business manager," Newton said, "I unequivocally advised the commissioner today that Billy Martin has no such financial problems and that anyone endeavoring to mislead the commissioner or the public on this matter would be well advised to avoid such efforts."

Kuhn was in Washington yesterday, but when asked through a spokesman where he had learned that Martin had financial problems, he said, "In discussion with the Yankees."

## Charge Called Unfair

In response to that, Newton said, "I would like the so-called Yankees to identify themselves or himself or herself and to produce not to me but to the commissioner the information and data to support this unfair charge."

There has been talk since Martin was dismissed last Sunday that Steinbrenner was planning to set Martin up in business as one way of aiding in what has been termed Martin's "rehabilitation."

Newton, however, alleges that there is a sinister, ulterior motive in the owner's efforts to help the former manager, whom he must pay \$120,000 a year for the next two years under terms of his contract.

"Billy has seen fit to say that he is not interested in my help or assistance, financially or any other way," Steinbrenner said yesterday, "and I will most certainly honor his wishes if that is the way he feels. In my discussions with one of his advisers I had offered assistance in any way I could and evidently Billy is not interested. Therefore I will certainly abide by his wishes."

"It is clear to me," Newton said, "that George Steinbrenner does not want Billy Martin in baseball in the next year and would prefer him out of the limelight. George obviously does not want Billy Martin to manage another team, be it a local team or any other team in the American League.

"He may be attempting to mislead the commissioner and the public about Billy's so-called financial problems so that he can go to the commissioner with an offer of magnanimously assisting this unfortunate ex-manager of the Yankees. This would appear to the commissioner as an attractive way to tie up Billy's time in the coming year while he's out of baseball, which he doesn't want to be."

"I have no desire to see Billy Martin out of baseball if that is what he wishes to do," Steinbrenner said. "I have never suggested that to the commissioner or anyone else. If there is an owner of a major league team out there who wishes to take up the challenge where the Minnesota Twins, the Detroit Tigers, the Texas Rangers, and myself, the Yankees, have failed I certainly would have no objection. My only thought was that Billy's own personal life would best be served by getting him out of the baseball limelight where he is

constantly finding it difficult to stay out of fights."

"The facts which are now surfacing out of Minneapolis-St. Paul and will continue most probably to surface can't be good for Billy or anyone else," Steinbrenner said.

He was alluding to a report that said an unidentified witness to the incident in a bar room said the fight resulted after Martin had bet \$500 to a penny he could whip Joseph Cooper, a salesman.

Kuhn could take disciplinary action against Martin in any of four ways: suspension, fine, probation, reprimand.

Some observers feel he will take some action, although in setting up a meeting with Kuhn, Martin apparently intends to explain his side of the Bloomington incident as well as several other factors that may help his case.

An account of the incident alleges that Martin pushed or hit Mr. Cooper in a Minnesota hotel after Mr. Cooper had pursued the manager into the hotel lobby, grabbed him from behind and started a fight.

Among the things Martin has become upset about, besides the allegations about his financial position, were the contention that his contract had a clause restricting his behavior and remarks by Steinbrenner or sources close to Steinbrenner about how the owner was trying to keep Martin from getting himself killed.

The contract, Newton noted, is a standard one that includes none of the behavioral provisions that Martin's old three-year contract included. The absence of such conditions was one of Martin's prerequisites for coming back.

Then there were the suggestions that Steinbrenner had dismissed Martin to keep him out of potentially more serious trouble than he has been in.