

# Federal Courts' Power Is Widened

The Supreme Court ruled yesterday, 7 to 0, that federal courts have power to block state court proceedings in order to vindicate the civil rights of individuals.

Finally settling an issue that has been unresolved for decades, the court held that an 1871 civil rights law, which opened up the federal courts to Negroes and other individuals contending abridgment of their rights, was a specific exception to a 1793 law forbidding federal court intrusions in state court trials.

In an opinion by Justice Potter Stewart, the court said federal judges must continue to use caution in deciding whether to grant injunctions that tend to increase friction between the state and federal courts.

The decision came in the case of a Bay County, Fla., "adult bookstore" operator who claimed that local judges were shutting down his business through unconstitutional civil proceedings. His case was dismissed by a federal court but was revived by yesterday's ruling.

Stewart said the court was adhering to principles of "Our Federalism" set forth last year, permitting injunctions against state criminal proceedings only in limited circumstances.

Still pressing for a possible adjournment this month, the court announced that it will hand down decisions Thursday and next Monday. More than two dozen major questions are still under advisement.

In other action:

- The court agreed to decide whether a controversial 1969 ruling on military trials may be applied retroactively to wipe out old court-martial convictions. The 1969 decision was that off-base, peacetime "civilian" type crimes are not subject to court-martial.

- The court ruled, 9 to 0, that clerks of the local Tampa, Fla., courts—though they are

laymen—are sufficiently competent and neutral to issue arrest warrants for violation of municipal ordinances.

- The court agreed to decide to what extent federal courts have power to review the length and conditions of prisoner confinement in state penitentiaries.

- The court ruled, 6 to 3, that New York state was entitled to the lion's share of unclaimed funds paid to the Western Union Telegraph Co. for purchase of money orders that were never redeemed.

- Over the dissent of Justice William O. Douglas, the court refused to review a lower court's approval of a Federal Power Commission license of the controversial Storm King powerhouse along the Hudson River.

Douglas, who has finished his opinion writing and left Washington early as is his custom, contended that the FPC had made only token compliance with federal environmental protection standards.