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Virginia Sheriffs

Rights of Protesters Outlined at Seminar

By Ken Ringle

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ASHLAND, Va., Nov. 16—An Arlington judge told some skeptical rural Virginia sheriffs here today that the civil rights of demonstrators must be considered in quelling disturbances.

Arlington County Court Senior Judge Thomas W. Dodge used the county's role in last spring's Mayday demonstrations to illustrate his point in a talk at the sheriffs' Jail Management Seminar, convened here by the Virginia Division of Corrections.

The judge described how 192 demonstrators were arrested early May 2 for trying to block Key Bridge, were given a court hearing and released the same day after posting a \$19.25 bond each.

About 30 per cent pleaded guilty to charges of obstructing traffic he said, and all but one of the rest forfeited the bond rather than return for formal trial. The only demonstrator who returned

for trial, said the judge was the only one charged with another offense. He was convicted for carrying a concealed weapon—a hunting traffic, he said, and all sack.

"We got some criticism from people who said we were too lenient, that we should have thrown the book at these people. . . . But we can't go ape on this," Dodge said.

"We decided every case on an individual basis, on the evidence before us. They knew they had gotten a fair hearing . . . were treated fairly by the system they had been trying to destroy. A number of them said that changed their outlook about the system. We had no further trouble from those people."

To most of the 73 sheriffs and deputies present, Dodge's words apparently challenged previously held, simpler notions about how best to
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handle demonstrators — a type of challenge penal officials here have said is a key purpose of the seminar.

"You mean you need evidence against these demonstrators?" asked burly Sheriff Henry A. Kennan of Louisa County. "Isn't their presence at a riot scene enough?"

"No, sir," said the judge. "Don't you try to decide these cases in such a mind that (demonstrations) won't happen again?" asked G. H. Saunders, the wizened chief deputy of Nelson County.

"That's not in my mind at all," Dodge said. "I try them one at a time on the evidence before me."

In most Virginia counties, sheriffs serve civil and criminal warrants, function as a rural police force and run the local jail—duties that keep them far removed from the urban scenes of most civil disorders.

But Julian Pugh, jail training officer for the division of corrections, and the seminar coordinator, urged those present to inform themselves about disturbance control in case they are called upon to assist law en-

forcement agencies in other parts of the state.

Last May, he noted, 35 deputies from five rural counties were called upon to help provide manpower for Arlington in a Mayday operation. He cited the coordination among law enforcement agencies in that instance as a major strength.

It included such details as Arlington police analyzing the assault plans published in the newspaper Quicksilver Times, and the State Department of Welfare and Institutions clearing some 900 prisoners from field correctional unit 30, a road camp south of Fairfax, to free the facility for use in continuing those apprehended in any mass arrests in Virginia.

For its part, Pugh said, Virginia was so interested in civil disorder control that it sent a former state trooper named Joseph N. Tucker "all the way to Hong Kong, China," to study the techniques of the Royal Hong Kong police in putting down mass riots there.

Tucker, now with the State Division of Justice and Crime Prevention, also addressed the sheriffs, emphasizing the necessity for both prior planning and flexibility in handling civil disorders.