

Ickes Testifies; Officers Fail To Find Briggs

Interior Secretary Spends 53 Minutes Before Grand Jury

BULLETIN.

Secretary of the Interior Ickes, emerging after 53 minutes before the grand jury investigating the "Hopkins letter," told reporters that he had been informed that George N. Briggs could not be found by Justice Department agents seeking to serve him with a subpoena.

Secretary of the Interior Ickes went before a grand jury in District Court this afternoon to testify in the investigation of an alleged forgery which he, himself, had termed "the Hopkins letter thriller."

Asked for comment by a newspaperman, the Secretary, hurrying to the grand jury room, threw back over his shoulder the Latin legal phrase, "Nolo contendere" ("I do not wish to contend)."

Reporters watching at the threshold of the investigation were surprised when the doors of the private elevator used by the judges opened and six men walked rapidly out. The short man walking behind the interference with his hat brim down was recognized immediately. It was Mr. Ickes.

All entered the judges' chambers nearby. A minute later Mr. Ickes

Same Type Defect Marks All Letters In Hopkins Case

A peculiarity in punctuation running through all the correspondence made public in the Hopkins "letter case" was noted today as one of the details under study.

The unusual use of the comma followed by no space between the comma and the following word shows throughout the correspondence wherever a comma is used. This was pointed to by some observers as showing that probably the same typist, at least, turned out all the different letters.

crossed the corridor to the jury-room, accompanied only by Henry A. Schweinhaut, special assistant to the Attorney General.

Telegrams Sought.

At about the same time the District Court issued subpoenas calling on the telegraph companies to search their files in New York, Washington and Akron, Ohio, for any telegraphic correspondence between George N. Briggs, suspended confidential assistant to Mr. Ickes, and C. Nelson Sparks, former Mayor of Akron, whose book attacking Wendell Willkie—"One Man"—started Washington's latest political drama involving men in high places.

It was learned that the investigators had been unable to serve Mr. Briggs with a subpoena. No one answered the door of his new home in the Fairlington apartment development in Arlington.

Two typewriters were taken from Mr. Briggs' office in the Interior Department, causing speculation that they had gone to the FBI laboratories for examination. Federal agents declined to say whether they were being examined in connection with the case.

Langer Cites Letter.

The grand jury, reassembling after a respite of several days, is seeking to determine whether Harry L. Hopkins was correct in asserting that his name was forged to a type-written letter predicting Wendell L. Willkie's renomination for the presidency.

Senator Langer, Republican, of North Dakota cited the letter in support of his resolution calling for a congressional investigation of Mr. Willkie's 1940 nomination. Senator Langer also read to the Senate a series of typed letters which he said were written by Mr. Briggs to C. Nelson Sparks, former Akron (Ohio) Mayor, who published a book critical of Mr. Willkie last fall.

The letter purportedly was from Mr. Hopkins to Dr. Umphrey Lee, president of Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, and was interpreted by some as meaning Mr. Hopkins not only desired Mr. Willkie's renomination but wanted to see Senator Connally, Democrat, of Texas replaced in the Senate.

Mr. Sparks has never given any

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SUSPENDED — George N. Briggs, an assistant to Secretary of Interior Ickes, was suspended by Mr. Ickes yesterday pending the outcome of the grand jury investigation into the so-called "Hopkins letter." —A. P. Photo.

Letters

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public explanation of how the Hopkins letter came into his possession. Senator Langer said he got the "Briggs letters" from Mr. Sparks.

Letter Called Forgery.

Henry A. Schweinhaut, special assistant to Attorney General Biddle, who is directing the grand jury investigation, declared he had "no doubt" that the Hopkins letter, published in Mr. Sparks' book—"One Man—Wendell Willkie"—was a forgery.

"We can prove it," he said, adding that he was confident the perpetrator would be discovered.

Mr. Schweinhaut conferred with Mr. Ickes yesterday after the Secretary had requested an opportunity to go before the grand jury. Mr. Ickes, who has disclaimed the role of "villain" in the drama, declared, "I do not relish the bandying about of my name in connection with a matter which seems to be as bizarre and absurd as it appears to be contemptible and vicious."

Mr. Briggs described the whole affair as a blast aimed at the Secretary by persons who "for years have been thirsting for Mr. Ickes' blood."

Action on Senator Langer's demand for a Senate inquiry was stalled meanwhile by a question of jurisdiction. Chairman Kilgore of a subcommittee appointed to consider the matter said a study was being made "as to our authority to investigate developments at a national convention."