

Grand Jury Said to Review Jailing of Jersey Reporter

By RONALD SULLIVAN

Special to The New York Times

TRENTON, Oct. 6—The Essex County grand jury that had requested the contempt citation and subsequent jailing of a reporter for refusing to answer some of its questions was reported tonight ready to re-examine its action.

The reporter, Peter J. Bridge of the defunct Evening News of Newark, was cited for civil contempt in State Superior Court and ordered jailed until he answered the grand jury's questions.

Mr. Bridge entered the Essex County Jail on Wednesday morning after a series of legal appeals extending to the United States Supreme Court were unsuccessful.

Refused to Answer

The furor resulting from his incarceration was reported to have prompted Essex County officials to reconsider the contempt charges against him.

Mr. Bridge was jailed for refusing to answer questions

pertaining to a story he had written in which he quoted Mrs. Pearl Beatty, a commissioner of the Newark Housing Authority, as saying that an unidentified man had offered her a \$10,000 bribe for her vote in the naming of a new authority executive director.

Mr. Bridge contended that the New Jersey law that permits reporters to refuse to identify sources protected him from answering the questions. He further argued that answering the questions would have a chilling effect on the guarantees on freedom of the press in the United States Constitution.

In response, Joseph P. Lordi, the Essex County Prosecutor, and the New Jersey courts contended that the questions asked of Mr. Bridge were relevant to the grand jury's investigation and that the reporter had forfeited his claim to silence by having publicly identified his source—Mrs. Beatty.

The grand jury has reportedly completed a presentment (a report that does not indict anyone) on its investigation but has held up making it public during the controversy over Mr. Bridge.

Now, however, Mr. Lordi said that he had "no doubt" that the grand jury was prepared to be briefed on the latest legal developments, including Mr. Bridge's jailing, and that it would most likely "make a judgment on the matter very soon."

Possible Action

While Mr. Bridge's sentence extends for the life of the grand jury, now set to end Oct. 30, Mr. Lordi said, "While I am sure they would have preferred him to answer the questions, I am also sure they do not want to sit around ad infinitum waiting for someone to make up his mind."

Although Mr. Lordi declined to speculate on what action the grand jury would take when it meets again, sources reported that there was growing pressure to have Mr. Bridge released from jail on the grounds that the courts had already made their argument against him, and that his information pertaining to the grand jury's housing authority investigation had never been that vital to begin with.

Meantime, expressions of support and encouragement continued to pour into Mr. Bridge's cell at the county jail.

And at a party here last night of the state legislative correspondents club honoring two former reporters, \$235 was collected and sent to Mr. Bridge's wife, Anne.

Misses His Family

Special to The New York Times

NEWARK, Oct. 6—Mr. Bridge looked around a wire-enclosed visitors' room in the Essex County Jail today and said "About 6:30 at night is the worst time."

"That's when I used to get home to my family and be with them. I miss them very much." much."

But Mr. Bridge, whose wife is expecting a baby at any time, said that he was determined to serve out his indeterminate term because he considered the issue very important. He was imprisoned Wednesday.

At one point when he was speaking of the effect of his jailing on his wife, son and daughter, Mr. Bridge tightened his lips, and said: "Talking about this is not making me feel any better, so I'm going to talk about something else."

Sitting in a visitors' room in the jail in an open-neck sports shirt, slacks and brown boots, Mr. Bridge said that he had been assigned to work in the dispensary and was not being confined to a cell.