

SFChronicle
Fresno Bee
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Contempt
Case Halted

Washington

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas ordered a halt yesterday to court proceedings in Fresno, where three newspapermen have been found in contempt of court for refusing to name sources.

The proceedings were to have resumed yesterday in Fresno.

Superior Court Judge Denver C. Peckinpaugh has cited three members of the editorial staff of the Fresno Bee for contempt 62 times.

The three newsmen are George F. Gruner, managing editor of the newspaper, and William K. Patterson and Joe Rosatto, reporters.

The California Supreme Court refused on Wednesday to hear their appeal. They said they planned to petition the Supreme Court for review, and asked Douglas to stay the proceedings until the high court acts on their request.

In convening the proceedings, Peckinpaugh asked the newsmen where they obtained transcripts of grand jury testimony on which they based stories published in the newspaper.

The transcripts contain testimony on which the Fresno county grand jury based bribery and conspiracy indictments against Fresno City Councilman Marc Stefano and two others. Stefano is accused of accepting a \$4000 bribe to help developer Julius Aluisi obtain an \$11,520 sewer fee refund.

The Bee staffers contend they were denied their constitutional rights to a fair hearing, including due process of law and a chance to confront witnesses.

In refusing to disclose the source of the transcript testimony, they cited the California newsmen's shield law. They testified they did not receive the material from any officers of the court.

Associated Press