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WILLIAM FARR
Contempt case

5-Day Term For L.A. Reporter

Los Angeles

Los Angeles Times reporter William Farr yesterday was given the maximum punitive sentence of five days in jail and a \$500 fine for contempt of court by Superior Court Judge Charles H. Older, who said Farr has "held himself above the law." "In my view, the circumstances of this case warranted a much more severe sentence, were it within the power of this court to impose," Older said at the end of a 22-minute hearing during which he severely criticized Farr for obtaining transcripts of a witness' statement during the 1970 Charles Manson murder trial.

Farr will remain free until the U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco rules on his writ of habeas corpus. The writ claims the First Amendment gives newsmen the right to keep secret their sources and also claims that Older failed to give Farr an impartial hearing when he originally found him in contempt of court three years ago.

Farr, who was found in contempt for refusing to reveal the source of the transcripts, served 46 days in jail before he was freed in January, 1973, by U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas pending federal appeals of the case.

Yesterday, Older quickly disposed of the question of whether Farr could be sentenced to 65 days — five for each of the questions he refused to answer about the identity of two of the six Manson trial attorneys he said gave him the information.

Mark Hurwitz, Farr's attorney, had barely begun his argument that the 13 questions represented a single contempt of the court, not 13, when Older said abruptly: "I have already determined Mr. Farr's refusal constitutes but one contempt."

Older, who originally sentenced Farr to remain in jail until he revealed his sources, was forced last June 20 to limit the sentence. Acting under a ruling of the state Court of Appeal, Superior Court Judge William Levit, held that further incarceration of Farr would be punitive rather than coerce him to talk. State law limits the punitive sentence for civil contempt to five days and \$500.

Farr said he was relieved to have a "virtual life sentence" reduced to five days in jail but disagreed with Older's stinging criticism of his conduct as a newsmen.

Older said Farr "acted with reckless disregard" of the Manson defendants' right to a fair trial and of the public's interest in having the criminal case concluded without retrials.

Farr later told newsmen that Older had "conveniently ignored" the fact that the Manson jury was sequestered, at a cost of \$230,000 to taxpayers, and could not have read the story about Manson "family" plans to murder celebrities.

Farr said only the statements of defendants quoted in the article — and not the article itself — were "lurid and sensational."

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