

Sheriff Stahl found guilty in firing case

by Jerry Mitchell
United Press International

CHARLOTTE—Mecklenburg County Sheriff Donald W. Stahl was found guilty of voter intimidation Thursday for firing a deputy but a provision requiring his removal from office was struck down.

The Republican sheriff was ordered to pay a \$500 fine and court costs. And to offer Deputy Everett "Sam" Mccollum, who was fired Nov. 6 for voting against Stahl, reinstatement within 15 days with back pay.

Although defense attorney James E. "Bill" Walker was given 10 days to appeal the ruling, he was expected to let it stand.

District Judge Clifton E. Johnson returned the verdict but ruled that the prescribed punishment of removal from office was highly unfair and said there was a lack of knowledge on Stahl's part about the obscure state law.

Johnson ruled the punishment section of the statute unconstitutional and used his discretion under another statute to keep Stahl in office.

"This was a hard case because, as Mr. Walker argued, I think we had a technical violation," said District Attorney Peter S. Gilchrist III.

"The state does not intend to appeal," said Gilchrist. "The punishment (section) was extremely harsh and I think we have a good judgement."

Neither Stahl nor Mccollum would comment following the trial.

Walker argued that it would have served no useful purpose to remove Stahl from office and said he had been punished enough by the court proceedings.

"If you think that's a fair statute, strip him of his office," Walker told Johnson. "What good is it to the community to get rid of a man who has taken the sheriff's office out of politics?"

"If he violated the statute, he violated one that was technical in nature," he said. "There ain't a lawyer in town that I know of who knew about this statute."

Thieu calls military aid request minimum to maintain war effort

United Press International

SAIGON—President Nguyen Van Thieu said Thursday the \$300 million in additional U.S. military aid asked by President Ford is

the minimum he needs to sustain South Vietnam's war effort. He said it would not be enough if Hanoi also received aid from Russia and China.

Thieu, in a rare session with newsmen,

declined a direct answer when asked if South Vietnam would collapse if additional military aid was not granted by Congress.

He said he could not predict the date, "but if we do not have enough military assistance the situation then would be very dangerous for 1975."

Thieu's breakfast meeting with nine correspondents, the first in nearly two years, appeared motivated by Ford's request for an additional \$300 million in aid for South Vietnam.

Ford also asked for \$222 million more in aid for Cambodia. The request has run into heavy opposition in Congress.

From Phon Penh, UPI Correspondent Alan Dawson reported that a battered supply convoy Thursday ran a gauntlet of Communist fire up the Mekong River to bring in the first food supplies in more than a month. U.S. sources said the arrival of the six-ship convoy delayed and hopefully avoided the need for an American airlift.

Military sources said two other ships were sunk during the convoy's perilous, day-long, 71-mile trip up the winding Mekong River from South Vietnam.

According to a partial transcript of the Saigon session, Thieu accused the Communists of launching a general offensive and said they now have three to five times more war potential in the country than three years ago, while South Vietnamese military strength has been reduced.

"I have said the \$300 million is the minimum we need badly to sustain the current situation," Thieu said. "Now if Hanoi continues to receive much help from Russia and China \$300 million will not be sufficient to defeat them or to stop them."

Thieu said that at the time the Vietnam cease-fire was signed in January, 1973, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had promised him that China and the Soviet Union would restrain the North Vietnamese war effort. He said this had not happened.

The administration last year requested \$1.4 billion in military aid for South Vietnam from Congress, which cut the figure to \$700 million. Thieu said that at the present level of fighting this did not permit the one-for-one replacement of military equipment permitted by the cease-fire agreement.

Edimisten asks moratorium on utility price hike practice

by Dollie L. Smith
United Press International

RALEIGH — Attorney General Rufus Edimisten Thursday said he was requesting the Utilities Commission to impose a 60 to 90 day moratorium on the use of the fuel

escalator clause and interim rate increases for North Carolina power companies.

Edimisten, in a morning news conference, said he had not consulted with the commission about his request, but he thought it would go along with his request.

He said such a moratorium would not bankrupt any power company during the period and would allow the commission and his office a breathing period to study the rate making process which has doubled and in some areas of the state tripled cost of electricity during the past year.

He said there is enough fat in the firms' budget to absorb losses during the moratorium.

two of them—Missouri and North Dakota—appear ready to ratify it.

In the third state, Indiana, she described the chances as mixed. Asked what states might follow, Ms. Cox replied: "After a couple will go, any can go. We are looking for the bandwagon effect."

Other states in which the pro-ERA forces are working for ratification include Illinois and North Carolina.

The Oklahoma House last week defeated ERA and it was set aside recently by committees in both Virginia and Louisiana. But Ms. DeCrow noted the Louisiana action was taken in a special session and there is a possibility that legislature will reconsider.

ERA to pass soon: feminist

by Sara Fritz
United Press International

WASHINGTON—Feminist leader Karen DeCrow predicted Thursday the Equal Rights Amendment will be ratified by April, but Democratic National Chairman Robert Strauss foresaw a full hard year's work ahead before it becomes part of the Constitution.

Ms. DeCrow, president of the National Organization for Women, cited growing support the ERA—an amendment prohibiting statutory sex discrimination which so far has been ratified by 33 of the necessary 38 states.

"We believe Florida will be the 38th state," she told a news conference on ERA. "I'm still holding to my prediction that it will be ratified in April."

Ms. DeCrow made no prediction on the other four states, but mentioned North Dakota, Missouri, Indiana and Illinois as possibilities.

"We have a full hard year's work ahead," Strauss told reporters. He said he has been contacting Democratic state legislators, governors and other state-level politicians in an effort to raise support for ERA.

"It has been tougher than I thought it was going to be," he said. "It's a matter of far more than male chauvinism. It's a matter of disinterest on the part of a great number of

women." Among the 17 ERA, Strauss said, there are eight or nine in which he would estimate the chances as at least 50-50.

"The states where there is any good possibility are getting smaller," he said. "We can't lose many more. It's not going to be easy."

Actor Alan Alda also appeared at the news conference. He noted that ERA would eliminate laws which discriminate against men.

Elizabeth Cox, NOW's ERA expert, said in a separate interview that she anticipates three state legislatures will vote on the amendment in the next few weeks, but only

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