Supreme Court of the United States RY

OCTOBER TERM, 1970

Supreme Court, U. S.

DEC 1 1970

In the Matter of:

Docket No. 27

GLADYS BODDIE, et al.,
Appellants
vs.
CONNECTICUT, et al.,
Appellees

SUPREME COURT, U.S.
MARSHAL'S OFFICE
DEC | 9 59 AM 77

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Place

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Date

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM

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GLADYS BODDIE, ET AL.,

Appellants

VS No. 27

CONNECTICUT, ET AL.,

Appellees

The above-entitled matter came on for argument at 1:30 o'clock p.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 1970.

BEFORE:

WARREN E. BURGER, Chief Justice HUGO L. BLACK, Associate Justice WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS, Associate Justice JOHN M. HARLAN, Associate Justice WILLIAM J. BRENNAN, JR., Associate Justice POTTER STEWART, Associate Justice BYRON R. WHITE, Associate Justice THURGOOD MARSHALL, Associate Justice HARRY A. BLACKMUN, Associate Justice

APPEARANCES:

ARTHUR B. LA FRANCE, ESQ. College of Law Arizona State University Tempe, Arizona 85281 Attorney for Appellants

RAYMOND J. CANNON, Assistant Attorney General, State of Massachusetts 30 Trinity Street Hartford, Connecticut 06115 Attorney for Appellees

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: We will hear argument in Number 27: Boddie against Connecticut.

Mr. La France.

ORAL ARGUMENT BY ARTHUR B. LA FRANCE, ESQ.

ON BEHALF OF APPELLANTS

MR. LA FRANCE: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court: I am a counsel for the Appellants in this proceeding, which involves a direct appeal from the District Court for the District of Connecticut where the Three-Judge panel dismissed Appellants' complaint.

Appellants had alleged that they are welfare receipients who seek to divorce their husbands in the courts of Connecticut, but could not afford to pay the court costs imposed by the State of Connecticut, of roughly \$60.

They further allege that the Connecticut Court officials had refused to waive those costs. Appellants sought an injunction on the basis that the fee statute was unconstitutional, requested the District Court to order the Connecticut Courts to accept Appellants' divorce papers for filing and to arrange service of process.

- Q When were these papers originally filed; approximately?
 - A At the end of March in 1968, Your Honor.
 - Q From March of '68 until now I suppose we must

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assume they have not been able to accumulate \$60?

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A That is correct with at least five of them,

Your Honor. As to two of the original nine plaintiffs, their

participation in this proceeding has been withdrawn.

Before appearing here today I asked one of the people attached oto the Neighborhood Office where I was formerly employed, to check with the Appellants to make certain that they are, in fact, still interested in this proceeding.

Because of the shortage of time, only four of the remaining seven were contacted. They are still married, after a fashion and still, emphatically, undivorced, and still unable to raise the fees necessary to initiate a divorce proceeding in Connecticut.

Q How much of a showing have they made with respect to their indigency, if you wish to call it that, and second: has any showing been brought up to date from March of 1968 until now?

A With response to the first, or in response to the first question, Your Honor, the showing which was submitted to the courts of Connecticut and to the District Court, consisted of affidavits which appear in the appendix in this Court indicating their family situation and income situation and economic responsibilities of the Appellants, and we would argue clearly establishing indigency at that time.

Now, we have never had an evidentiary hearing on the

issue of indigency because this case was resolved in the District Court on the pleadings and for the purpose of this appeal and for the purposes of the District Court, indigency was conceded.

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At the present time there is nothing before this

Court, updating that showing of some two-and-a-half years ago.

I suppose if this Court were to hold in favor of the Appellants a remand would be appropriate and at that time as to any of the Appellants in the case, the state would have an opportunity to challenge their indigency.

It is Appellants' contention that the conduct of the Appellees has denied them due process rights, specifically and particularly with respect to the rights to petition for redress of grievances. This is a right which appears in the First Amendment; is incorporated into the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment, as reflected in decisions of this Court such as N.A.C.C.P. versus Button, the United Mine Workers versus Illinois decision; Railway Trainmen versus Virginia.

The right to petition, as this Court has recognized, is a fundamental right. As long ago as Chambers versus

Baltimore and Ohio Railway, this Court said that the right to sue and defend in the courts is the alternative of force. In an organized society it is the right conservative of all other rights. It lies at the foundations of orderly government.

Since this case was argued last year, two decisions

of this Court have been rendered, which I feel bear upon the position of the Appellants, at least with respect to their due process argument. I refer to Sniadach versus Family Finance and Goldberg versus Kelly.

Essentially, both of those cases held that before
the property interests of a citizen can be impaired or affected by state action, a hearing must be afforded. The Appellants seek that very same hearing and yet their position is
more critical than that of the position of the Appellants in
Goldberg versus Kelly and in Sniadach, because in this instance,
not only have the Appellants been denied a prior hearing, which
was the issue in Sniadach and Goldberg, but they have been
denied any hearing. They have simply been denied the opportunity to seek a divorce in the courts of Connecticut.

For this reason Appellants maintain that the rights to due process have been denied. Of equal importance, is the other aspect of our argument which relates to the right to equal protection as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.to the United States Constitution.

As long ago as 1941 Mr. Justice Jackson wrote, in Edwards versus California: "The mere state of being without funds is a neutral fact. Constitutionally an irrelevance, like race, creed or color." More recent decisions of this court have indicated that poverty, likewise is a suspect criterion and when a state discriminates among its citizens upon the

basis of poverty that it must make the same showing to justify that discrimination as would be required if the discrimination were racial.

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Q Mr. LaFrance, let me follow through a little bit onyour equal protection argument. Suppose, instead of wanting a divorce, your clients wanted to get married, and the marriage license were \$3. Would you say that equal protection demands that they be given the marriage license without payment of a fee?

Made that in point of fact they could not afford that fee. And the reason is simply this: although a dog license, for example, may not affect a matter of constitutional import, this court has said that marriage and procreation are basic civil liberties of man and I refer to Loving versus Virginia; Skinner versus Oklahoma and Griswold versus Connecticut.

And so the Appellants' position would be that whenever a fee is attached to a state franchise of activity which is of constitutional magnitude, then that fee must be raised on behalf of an indigent.

- Q Well, then you draw no distinction between the need for a divorce and the desire to marry?
- A That is, within limitations, correct. We are primarily concerned with -- particularly concerned about divorces in this case because it carries with it the right to

marry, or remarry, I should say; the right to procreate with someone other than the present spouse so that in the context of this case, divorce and remarriage are very closely linked.

- Q And does your record show in any that romarriage was contemplated by the parties, or any of them?
- A No, it does not, Your Honor. I believe the structure of Connecticut and of most states is such that divorce carries with it the right to remarry.
- Q Then let me ask the next question which you indicated: can you carry your Equal Protection Clause to a fishing license or a dog license?
 - A No, I would not.

- Q And you draw the line then where?
- A I draw the line with respect to constitutionally protected interests. For example: we are here not talking simply about divorce; we're here talking about the right to have access to the courts.

The First Amendment speaks about this specifically. It says nothing about fishing licenses or dog licenses. You asked me a moment ago about marriage. This Court has said that marriage is a basic civil liberty. Taking that statement as a given and accepting it, then I would argue further that conditioning a basic civil liberty on the ability to pay for it is an impermissible state regulation of constitutional rights.

Q And you wouldn't put the right to fish in that lake of Connecticut, as a civil liberty right, if there are any lakes in Connecticut with fish left in them?

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A There are some. I would say that it is a right. I suppose the distinction which becomes important is the distinction, let us say, between Shapiro versus Thompson on the one hand and Williams versus Dandridge on the other.

In Williams versus Dandridge maximum grants were upheld in welfare cases by this Court. In Shapiro versus Thompson, in welfare cases residency restrictions were stricken down. The difference was not that there weren't rights or interests in both cases, but that the right in Shapiro versus Thompson was deemed to be a constitutional right: the right of free travel in the United States, whereas in Williams versus Dandridge the majority of this Court concluded that although there were interests being affected by the state's economic regulation, they were not of constitutional dimension and as a consequence, the showing by the state of a reasonable purpose for regulation, was sufficient to justify maximum grants. I don't know if this is responsive, but it would be the distinction which I would draw, for example, between access to the courts and a fishing license.

Q Mr. LaFrance, what do you do about the man who wants to sue to prevent pollution of the air by the electric company in New Haven? Would he have to pay fees?

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Q Well, you want the same indigent protection you have in criminal prosecutions. Do you really go that far in this case?

I don't believe so. We at least want the same protection that is afforded in criminal cases as to the opportunity for a hearing. We would not go beyond that and maintain that the criminal protections, for example, involving appointed counsel, are necessary in civil cases. And there are a number of distinctions which are relevant.

For example --

Well, suppose the person files on air pollution and some legal aid society takes over the lawyer part; he doesn't pay fees and then he wants to appeal. Who takes care of that?

A I'm sorry, Your Honor, I didn't understand the question. With respect to the appeal who would take care of the costs?

If the state could make a showing that the costs were necessary to maintain the appellate system, then I suppose as a matter of equal protection that it could require appellate costs of an indigent.

Q I honestly don't know of any system where the court costs take care of the court. They never do. I mean they always need that money.

A I agree and one of the positions which the

Appellants have maintained in their brief is that the justification offered by the state for imposing costs on indigents

simply is inadequate for the burden that results. For example,

in terms of producing revenues, it doesn't make sense to require that revenues be generated by the poor who simply are

unable to produce them.

Q You would make much more sense with me if you could draw a line other than saying that in all civil actions the person without income can file without payment of fees, which is a pretty broad hump of litigation.

A And yet, Your Honor, in roughly half of the states, the very same type of informa pauperis litigation which we are arguing here today is provided as a matter of statute and yet those states by their court systems don't seem to be crumbling under the burden.

Q To -- draw up a contract?

A I have not surveyed the exact dimensions but of these provisions but at least as to some of the states the door is that wide open. That is, an indigent may simply file an action.

- Q Without the payment of any fees at all?
- A Yes, Your Honor.
- Q Suppose he wins? Suppose he sued for a million dollars and gets a million dollars; can the state get its \$20

A I would think that it could do that.

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Q I would hope so.

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Q While we have you interrupted, counsel, you spoke in terms of a right that comes by way of franchise.

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Would you say that a man who seeks a license to practice to

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carry on the business of being a barber or an electrician or

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a plumber, one of the licensed activities, that had a substan-

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tial license fee of a sum due up to \$100 or more. Is he in the

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same category as your client here?

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A I don't think that he is, Your Honor. Now, as

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a matter of equal protection --

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Q Well, isn't there an inherent right, a constitutional right to engage in an occupation if you can pay the

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fee?

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A There certainly is that, but there may also be a right on the part of the state legitimately to regulate certain types of activities and there may also be a right on the part of the state to impose licensing fees, examination fees and investigation fees and the like by I'm thinking specifically now of the \$200 I am going to have to repay to the Arizona Bar Association within the next few months, but the situation here is dramatically different because these Appellants are seeking to exercise a right which is specifically protected by the constitution, which has body in the First Amendment. The right

of a plumber, I suppose, is assured by the Equal Protection
Clause and the Due Process Clauses against arbitrary or
capri ious discrimination, but the right of the person to go
into court is as fundamental as a right of a person to vote or
the right of a person to exercise free speech or engage in
political activity.

And as to these, before the state can impair these rights it must demonstrate a compelling necessity for the regulation which it seeks to impose.

Q Well, does not the state in its capacity of parens patriae, if not on broader grounds, have a deep interest in regulating the termination of the marriage state?

A It certainly does that, Your Honor, but in this instance the regulation involved, imposing a fee upon indigents does not --

Q I know, but it's imposed on everyone; isn't it?

A Yes, but the only aspect of the fee system which is being challenged here today is that which operates against indigents and bars them from the courts. The regulation which is involved in not particularly well-calculated to save the family, since it applies to all types of litigation.

In addition, of course, the courts of Connecticut have spoken with respect to divorce. They have said that divorce is permissible; is authorized as a matter of state policy, if grounds are shown; and yet the state has gone farther

and said, "We don't mean this with respect to the poor, because as to them we attach a further condition; the condition that they cannot get a divorce unless they somehow abroque their condition of poverty.

versus Parks, cited in our last brief which we filed with this Court, noted that if, in the District of Columbia, in addition to the requirements which Congress has imposed for obtaining a divorce, if there were a further requirement that only the wealthy or the affluent could obtain divorces, then there would be issues of serious constitutional dimension raised and I submit that this is the case which is contemplated by that court.

- Q That hypothetical really isn't worth very much because there is no state in the country that has ever had any such statute.
 - A Except that the effect --
- Q Negatively; the negative impact is what you are talking about?
 - A Yes, I am, Your Honor.
- Q Suppose we agreed with you, and decided the case the way you want it decided and a week afterward someone comes in and wants to go to court and they say, "I have plenty of money; if you don't let me file my action without the payment of the fee, you are denying me equal protection as compared with Gladys Boddie and the other people involved here?

change places with life with Gladys Boddie, she would be very happy to meet them and change places with them. I don't mean that entirely facetiously, because I don't believe there is an obligation upon the state to equalize all of the inequities of life, but what we do contend here is that the state, when it creates a right or in this instance, when it forces a person to come to it to resolve that person's affairs, cannot create new inequities; cannot impose requirements which, I suppose life itself, does not impose.

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What we have here is a situation like that in
Williams versus Illinois, decided in June of this past year
where a person who would not pay a fine was required to work
it off in the State of Illinois and this court said that on its
face that's a perfectly reasonable, equitable statute except
that in operation for the poor it makes an invidious discrimination.

Now, I suppose that a prisoner in Illinois might appear some day before this Court and make the same argument that could be made with respect to both Gladys Boddie; that is that the indigent are receiving preferential treatment, But the crux of this case is not that; it is simply that the state cannot discriminate against the poor, in structuring its legal system.

With respect to the due process and equal protection

arguments, which Appellants have submitted to this Court, I suspect that the comments I have made by this time are at least a survey of our position.

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There is one other aspect of our position which I would like to turn to and that is the arguments — that is with reference to the arguments which the state has put forward to justify its fee system. The fee system does not deter frivolous litigation or if it does, it does so only with respect to the poor and as to them, it deters all litigation. It does not provide revenues, at least not from the poor, because they are unable to pay these fees.

It does not particularly, or at least measure of, conserve revenues or facilities or services in the court system. And even if it did, it has never been held or believed to my knowledge that the cost of constitutionally imposed burdens relieves the states from fulfilling their duties under those burdens.

In Shapiro versus Thompson this Court said that, "We recognize that a state has a valid interest in preserving the fiscal integrity of its programs. But a state may not accomplish such a purpose by invidious discrimination between classes of its citizens. It could not, for example, reduce its expenditures for schools by barring indigent children, and yet the State of Connecticut is attempting to reduce its expenditure for courts by barring indigent litigants.

We wish to emphasize that it is not enough for the Appellees to show a mere rational basis for the fee system which operates in the State of Connecticut. They must show more a compelling necessity for imposing court fees upon the poor.

This Court, in Shapiro versus Thompson, which I just quoted from, said in essence, that only a compelling necessity could justify discriminating among citizens on suspect criteria, such as poverty or race, and discriminating in a manner which affects important rights, such as the petition for redress of grievances.

We ask this Court to reverse the Court below; to give the relief which Appellants seek and in so doing we have maintained in the last brief, which we submitted to this Court, that a holding in favor of Appellants can be narrowly based; or narrowly limited in its implications.

This case involves a specific constitutional guarantee: the right to petition for redress of grievances.

It involves litigation concerning matters of constitutional magnitude: marriage, procreation. Further, it involves matters which cannot be settled privately.

The State of Connecticut has said to these

Appellants that they cannot resolve their affairs privately;

they must go into state courts to seek the relief they need

and yet at the same time have barred them from those courts.

A holding emphasizing these factors, for example, would not compel a later holding that counsel must be appointed in civil cases or a later holding that fees for the use of golf greens on a public golf course must be waived for the poor.

A useful analog for this case is Goldberg versus

Kelly, where this Court considered the meaning of due process
in welfare termination cases, and concluded that a hearing is
the essence of due process, but that appointment of counsel
may not be required.

In conclusion, then, we ask this Court to grant the relief for Appellants --

Q I don't quite get that brief. The distinction you draw there. Maybe the party is so indigent that they can't hire a lawyer.

A That is correct, Your Honor and I would suppose that tin many, if not most aspects of civil litigation it would be useful, perhaps necessary, to have an attorney, but a holding in this case would not compel a later holding that counsel must be appointed in civil cases.

Q Why would it not?

A Because in this case we are relying upon a specific First Amendment guarantee and the right to petition for redress of grievances. There is no such --

Q They might be barred from it as successfully

by not being able to hire a lawyer, as by not being able to pay the fees.

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A I take it that the First Amendment, in speaking about the right topetition is speaking about access to the courts or to government. It would always remain true that the fruits of that access inherently would be unequal. Now --

Q Well, if it's unequal, wouldn't there be any way to equalize it?

A Perhaps as a matter of equal protection under the 14th Amendment this Court might want to go farther and to hold that, for example, counsel must be appointed in certain types of civil cases.

Q Why might they not be influenced to go far enough eventually under your arguments, to say that courts are necessary to civilized people. You've got to have them in the government, and therefore they must supply all without regard to their race, color or amount of money they have.

A I would think that a holding of that nature as to courts would be perfectly appropriate. Now, when I say that what I have in mind are the kinds of considerations this Court had in mind in Goldberg versus Kelly, in saying that due process must be afforded at some point by the state, whether it be in what is called an administrative hearing or what is called a court, but that the functions of courts must be performed and they must be performed equally, at least open

g g equally to the rich and the poor alike. 2 Q And the only way to do that unless you say that 3 you will deny equal protection to the rich, would be to say that the courts must be open to all to prosecute or defend their claims, whether they have money or do not have money and they 5 must pay the costs if they are able. A And they must pay the costs --T 8 Q Costs if costs are imposed at all. It seems to me like that's fair, but as to how you would take this. I'm not saying that's right or wrong; I'm just asking you. 10 A I don't think the argument carries that far if 99 I understand you correctly. 12 13 Q Yes. Well, the argument which I am making today I 14 don't think compels anyone to go that far at any time. 15 Q Just as far as your client goes? 16 A That is correct. 17 Q A good lawyer like that --18 A Thank you. 19 ORAL ARGUMENT BY RAYMOND J. CANNON, ASSISTANT 20 ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CONNECTICUT, ON BEHALF 21 OF THE APPELLEES 22 MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Mr. Cannon. 23 MR. CANNON: Mr. Chief Justice and may it please the 24

Court:

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To understand what is really at stake in this case perhaps it's well to outline briefly the procedures followed in divorce actions or civil actions in Connecticut, all civil actions.

First of all, of course the client sees the attorney and the attorney determines whether there is a cause of action that involves a writ, which is delivered to the officer to make service at the expense of the client. And then the officer returns the writ to court. At that time the statute comes into play. It says the Clerk of the Court shall charge \$45 for entering all civil causes. That's the statute.

To accomplish the relief sought by the plaintiffs in this case it is necessary that some provision also be made to pay these auxiliary costs which are incident to divorce cases. Very often those expenses, maybe advertisement in a publication particularly when the defendant is absent from the state.

In this complaint another fact we must bear in mind it seems to me, in this complaint the only plaintiffs are women on welfare; they're not poor people generally. There are thousands of poor people, as everyone knows, who are working their heads off to try to make a living and keep the family together and object to going on welfare. Now, that class of people is entitled to relief just as well as these people if they are entitled to relief.

Presently the court has the thought: what has been

since the last time we were here? Presently we find no 9 3 1 120 Court, but they won't supply it. 6 Doesn't Connecticut furnish on application the T filing fees for divorces for people who are on relief? 8 9 10 court fees are charged but they are not informa pauperis 99 12 13 14 15

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inability of welfare women or all poor people to get divorce. action. There are plenty of them handled by the Legal Assistance Association; a great number of them are being handled. We tried to get some figures from them through the Clerk of the

No, Your Honor; we do not have any general informa pauperis statute. We have other situations where no

statutes; they apply to everyone, regardless of his status.

There is this Legal Services Program which we mentioned in our brief before, which has been initiated by HEW and the local welfare departments. It's an experiment that's beingcarried on in five States in the Union, and Connecticut happens to be one of them. It's a legal service organization in the towns of Meriden, Southington and Wallingford.

That would take care of the problem that Mr. Justice Black was inquiring about, but it doesn't reach the question of filing fees, the \$45 or \$60, does it?

The sheriff's fees, there is no direction of A action in the sheriff's fees.

- Well, what is the amount of the fee here?
- A \$45 is what goes to the State of Connecticut as

an entry fee and the statute provides --

- Q The Legal Aid doesn't supply that; does it?
- A Yes; they do. And so does Legal Assistance.

 Connecticut contributes --
- Q Then why are we here?
- A Well, I don't know. At the beginning maybe the Legal Assistance didn't pay all the fees; they don't pay them now.
- Q Well, specifically do they pay the \$45 we're here talking about, if they ask for it?
- A I understand so, but it's dependent upon the judgment of the director of the Legal Aid Assistance. He, in his discretion, according to their set up, can détermine which cases have the most significance and, accordingly will allot the money that they collect from the Federal Government, the State of Connecticut and other charitable organizations, to pay the cases which in their opinion have priority.
- Q Your friend and you were both here on a constitutional issue, and as your friend has imposed it, a constitutional issue of no small importance. Is there any possibility that the petitioner has not exhausted her administrative
 remedies, if you can call them that? Or is it for us to decide as a constitutional matter that the fee is to be waived?
- A The difficulty in that regard, it seems to me, Your Honor please, is that these are not state agencies,

strictly speaking. The Legal Aid Assistance Association, Incorporated, is incorporated under the State of Connecticut pursuant to Federal legislation which recognized and advocated that these legal assistance associations be formed in conjunction with the -- supported by the local bar associations to provide legal services for the poor.

- Q Is any of it supported by the public?
- A Pardon me?
- Q Is any of their money supplied by the public; by the state or the government?
- A Oh, yes, Your Honor; there is money supplied.

 I have the 1968 audit, certified audit with me.
- Q Now, are these people effectively barred? I mean if they can get the money and have the money and there are public or private agencies available to supply these fees, are they really effectively barred? Is this a real controversy or not?
- A Well, it's opinion that they are not effectively barred and there are a lot of them in the divorce courts. It's not in the record, but I can give you a court assignment here on September --
 - Q Why do you say they are not barred?
- A The Legal Aid and the Legal Services Program, two different programs, each pay entry fees; each paying for its service. The Legal Aid Services is a separate program just

initiated and really gotten on the floor since we argued it last term. The first three or four months when that was organized, they operated an entirely different way than the Legal Aid Assistance Association. They are not a corporation; but -- contracts with the local Bar Association and they have a director where when a case comes in and its assigned to some attorney who has previously indicated that he will accept these cases and the Legal Aid Services Program pays his attorney a modest \$16 an hour plus the cost of expenses. And in Meriden, Wallingford and Southington, there was only one lawyer out of the whole three towns which comprise a population of about 75 or 100,000. I understand there is only one lawyer who didn't signify that he would signify that he would accept work along with this program, because of age or ill health or infirmity or for some reason.

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- Q These are private organizations?
- A It's a public organization --
- Ω If I may say so, not state supported?
- A It is state-supported through the welfare department.
 - Q And Federal; isn't it?
- A And Federal; both of these programs have Federal financing.
- Q Mr. CAnnon, as to these plaintiffs named in this case, you say they can get \$45 for the purpose of filing this

2 of the Health and Education Department of the Federal Govern-2 ment on this? 3 I have been more or less familiar with them 1 indirectly under the Legal Services Program. 5 And do they require that the money be given to 6 the indigent to conduct necessary lawsuits; or do you know? A No; the program is not given directly to the welfare recipient. 8 9 Who is it given to? It is given to the welfare department. If a 10 welfare client wants legal services, regardless of the nature, 29 divorce or anything else, then they have two attorneys who are 82 on their own payroll. Then they are on salaries --13 Do they supply them to the indigent? 14 They are free for the indigent. But then there 15 are additional services that if they want other services as 16 to the two people assigned to the particular job of rendering 17 legal services to this organization. Then the lawyers who have 18 subscribed as being willing to take these cases, the director 19 files the case with one of these lawyers. So that --20 He gives them a small fee; doesn't he? 21 Yes and --22 Q And that's what that amounts to, but they do 23 get a lawyer? 24 That's right; they get a lawyer and they get A 25 26

their fees paid and they get all kinds of problems --

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Q The Government and the STate contribute to the fund?

A That is correct, Your Honor.

Q Well, the problem in this case is that this was decided on a motion to dismiss and everything alleged in the complaint was taken to be true by the Three-Judge District Court, very properly. And it assumed that all of the allegations were true and it then granted a motion to dismiss the complaint. But that complaint was supported by affidavits; just to take a sample on appearing on page 11 of the record, affidavits, sworn to under oath in which the affiant says, among other things, that their welfare benefits in the State of Connecticut do not include an allotment for legal and court fees.

Now, there are several other affidavits containing the same or similar statements. And that appears to be true; these were sworn to under oath and on familiar grounds of practice and procedure and pleading on the motion to dismiss the complaint all those allegations were assumed to be true by the District Court, properly.

A Those --

Ω And we have no evidence in this case; we simply have an allegation -- the allegations of the complaint and the motion to dismiss, which was granted.

- A We will admit that; we don't argue that fact.
- Q Well, then what's the point of getting into --
- A Well, I thought the Court -- the situation has changed materially in the last couple years.

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Q Well, I'm interested in it; I asked you the questions. I am interested in it for this reason: we should not decide a case of this wide importance on a great constitutional question if, as a matter of fact, provisions are already made by the Government to take care of a lawyer if they have to have him.

A Well, Justice Black, I spoke in the first instance about the Legal Aid Service, which is an experimental problem; it's in its second year. It's a pilot program and as I understand it it is designed to determine whether the Federal Government will go deeper into this; provide a different kind of service from the Legal Aid or adopt some other measure. That's what I understand the Legal Aid Service is. And there is only one community — three communities in New Haven being handled by the Legal Aid — this is the new program of HEW. That prior to that time this Legal Aid Assistance Corporation was organized back in '64, I believe, and they are in turn, financed by the Federal Government, the State of Connecticut, the Ford Foundation, Meyer Foundation and other charitable contributions.

So, there are either public monies or charitable

monies and they are given to them for a certain purpose and they ended the year 1968 with a substantial sum and if these people made application for a divorce during that period this Legal Aid Assistance had the money to pay for these sheriffs and entry fees during that period and it must be a fact that the others are given the court -- the Clerk of the Superior Court, at my request didn't have the figures, but he requested assistance from the Legal Aid Assistance to give him the figures, but we didn't get them. I don't know why.

Q Well, if the State has failed to raise a defense which might be a defense, even if it's on the fact, of course, we don't have to decide it fully, but it could be sent back to the State Court in some proceeding so that they can look up and see whether or not these people can get their divorce money from the state, or from the Federal Government.

A Well, it may very well be that that would be the action to pursue, but we --

Q I should think it would be a problem of the state to raise all the defenses it had; one of them being that you are not stating facts when you say you do not have the money and can't get it, because there is provision made for it in the Federal and State contributions jointly.

A WEll, maybe I have confused the Court. The State has no appropriations --

Q I understand that.

A But --

- Q But the Federal Government and the State have.
- A It makes a contribution to these two organizations.
- Q It doesn't make any difference where the on money comes from if the people can get it to conduct their divorce cases, then Connecticut -- we should not branch out, I would think, into a decision on the constitutionality which practically opens up the way for paying fees and all for all indigents in all the courts in the nation.
- Q Counsel, I'm afraid I led you into this by
 my question as to whether or not the petitioner here had
 exhausted their -- Appellants here, I should say -- had exhausted all of their available remedies, whether administrative
 or otherwise. But you tell us now that the situation has
 developed considerably since the action was originally started?
- A That's my understanding of it from the best authority I know in the audits of the plaintiff in 1968.
- gram of the State of Connecticut, as it now exists, whether the money comes all from Connecticut, or part is from the Federal Government, and part is from the state, and that if that program would advance to persons in the posture of Mrs. Boddie, the \$45 to file or make the entry fee payment, then would there be any constitutional question for us to decide?

A I think not -- no; there would be no constitutional program. I would think that we can get that information by affidavit that if we could get cooperation from the number of people and so forth, from this Legal Aid Assistance --

Q Mr. Cannon, putting it in another way: I think what we're concerned about is whether today, Mrs. Boddie and her co-plaintiffs are barred in Connecticut Courts with respect to their divorce actions. Now, it may be that Mr. LaFrance is the one to answer this question and not you, but I think from the indications from the Bench this is a vital question at this time and that when Mr. La France gets up again I would like to know his answer to those questions.

has been absent -- with all due respect to Mr. LaFrance, from the state for some time -- but I made the inquiry myself, as to howmany of these plaintiffs since the action was instituted, have filed divorce cases. There are two; one was withdrawn, I think.

Maryann Dozier has filed for divorce in March, 1970.
Her lawyer is Jonathan E. Silver. Jonathan E. Silver is on the
staff of the New Haven Legal Assistance; am I correct?

And Mrs. Perez filed her return before we were here
-- her divorce application before we came to court the last
time and it is still on file. She's represented by an Attorney
Gallagher and I don't know whether he's employed by the New

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Haven Legal Assistance, the Legal Aid Services of Southington or whether he's an independent attorney.

- Q It wouldn't make any difference if, in the meantime, she's got her \$45entry fee paid through some source?
 - She's in court.
 - Q She's in court and she has no case any more.
- A That's the only two I know of and I was informed that some, if they are possibly capable of raising their money, by it to the Legal Aid by installments; otherwise they use their own funds that they get from other sources.
- Q Mr. Attorney General Cannon, right at the outset of his argument, Mr. La France said that he has satisfied himself by investigation, that at least with respect to five of these plaintiffs, these cases were not moot and I took that as a professional representation that these people did not have the money, the \$45 to pay the filing fee and furthermore, may I point out that the State of Connecticut, your client, when it filed a motion to dismiss this complaint, admitted every allegation of the complaint. That's what a motion to dismiss does.
 - A Correct, Your Honor.
- Q And that this rather surprises me that you're taking such a different posture now that you are here in this court. Now you are beginning to deny the allegations of the complaint. The place to do that --

A I didn't mean to deny the allegations of the complaint. I misunderstood, apparently, the questions raised as to what the status of these plaintiffs are now, in a year-and-a-half this case has been standing.

TA

It is our claim, of course, constitutionally, or on the merits, that although 23 states, for example, have informa pauperis statutes, two of them do not apply to divorce actions; one state has allowed divorce actions for women only; and I don't remember now what the other state required, but in all these cases that are included in the Federal Pauperis Statute, 281915, it's within the discretion of the Court as to whether to allow the plaintiffs to pursue in civil action a case without payment of court fees.

The Court in a recent case in Washington, D. C. has

-- there were two statutes: one a general statute allowing

residents of Washington, D. C. to secure a divorce action in

General Sessions Court, I believe it was, and then it made the

Informa Pauperis Statute, 281915. In that case the court didn't

get into the constitutional features, but it reconciled the two

statutes and said that inasmuch as 281915 did not exclude

divorce cases then the plaintiffs could proceed under Informa

Pauperis regulations.

A divorce is -- it is our further claim -- a divorce is not a matter of fundamental right. It's not within the framework intendment of the constitution. We get into cases like

Verbo and Sniadach and other cases involving due process, although there are civil factors involved, they are, to my opinion, nevertheless, fundamental rights. The one: wages.

Wages -- a person is more dependent upon his wages as a general rule than a person who has money in the bank. There is a distinct difference there and to deprive and attach wages is, as the Court said, "a brutal blow."

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Wages, incidentally, haven't been attached in Connecticut for years and years. And we get into the other cases on equal protection and so forth. Equal protection is protection of life, liberty and property. The equal protection has to -- the out of money consideration has to attach to one of those factors.

Life or liberty or property. In the Goldberg case of course it was liberty; that was due process. But we have submitted our argument in the first brief. We are now relying furthermore on the Dandridge versus Williams case, which is the reduction of the maximum multi-benefits due to families of over five or six. It was decided on equal proection and I think that case fits very well to this case.

Assuming it is, it was a rationality behind the procedure adopted by the state. Now, there is that it's reasonable to expect that persons using the courts would pay some of the expense of maintaining them. That is done in every state in the state court and in the Federal Courts as well

in this country, as far as I know.

O Mr.Cannon, I did not understand you to be changing your position in any sense in terms of not standing on the posture and pleadings when the case came here, but in response to my questions and others, you have indicated that the situation may have changed since this litigation started and that there may now be publicly-supported agencies within the State of Connecticut who would supply the \$45.

A There may well be.

Q That line of questioning was pursued, I think by all of us with respect to the basic proposition that Mr.

Justice Black suggested to you that if there is any other solution you do not reach the large constitutional issues.

A Well, if the factual situation -- I have to admit this: if the factual situation which exists today had existed when we filed a motion to dismiss, we wouldn't have filed a motion to dismiss.

When we filed a motion to dismiss, we had a lot of cases from this New Haven Legal Assistance Association --

Q Mr. Attorney General, as of right now does Mrs. Eoddie or anybody else have the \$45?

A I couldn't answer that --

Q Well, do you deny it? Do you deny that she is unable to put up the \$45?

A She personally, I would concede that she is

9 expenditure of several dollars; of \$6,000 for fees and costs... 2 in litigation. 3 In divorce cases? 4 In all kinds of cases, Your Honor. 5 Does it say divorces? 0 6 No; it's not broken down that --A 7 You mean pay in all cases in litigation? 0 8 A Excuse me, Your Honor please? It's all cases. 9 it's not broken down -- this audit is not broken down by -they have got "transports and costs," total: \$6,000. 10 99 What? 12 \$6,000 plus. A. For what? 13 0 14 Transports and costs. A What kind of cases? Criminal, civil or --15 16 Well, there's no criminal fees here. We have a public defender system in Connecticut in criminal --17 Does this budget cover all civil matters, the 18 one you are reading from? 19 20 A It's not necessarily restricted to civil cases. But it includes them? 29 It includes them. And it indicates a surplus 22 on hand at the end of the season. 23 MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: I think your time is up, 24 Mr. Cannon. 25

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MR. CANNON: I think so, Your Honor.

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Your time is up, too, Counsel, but I have a question or two to put to you.

MR. LA FRANCE: Thank you.

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: You have heard this colloquy, of course and I am sure that you as a member of the Bar, you would know that this Court doesn't reach constitutional issues if there is any way to avoid them.

Do you see any reason why this case should not be remanded to the Courts of Connecticut for consideration in light of the changed conditions which may have occurred and which are suggested to have occurred, by way of providing means for this \$45 entry fee?

- A I certainly do. There are several reasons.
- Q What are they?

A First, I would argue that the availability of other sources is irrelevant to whether or not these Appellants have a constitutional right to walk into a court of Connecticut and file a proceeding without having to pay for sanctions, for fees which that state court has imposed upon them.

Q Even if the State of Connecticut, through its agencies will provide that \$45 on request?

A Yes.

Now, secondly, with respect to that, the record in this case is clear that the State of Connecticut will not

provide those funds on request.

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I must say that I personally resent that a member of the Bar of this Court and as an Attorney, Mr. Cannon's going outside of the record --

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: We asked him to go outside of the record, Counsel.

MR. LA FRANCE: In the fashion in which he did, because: for example, there is no program in the State of Connecticut which will provide court fees to indigent litigants upon request. There is only one program in which the State of Connecticut is at all involved, and that is a pilot program serving a small section of Middletown and the county around it.

For the rest of the state, and I might add, for the restof the Nation, people going to Legal Services Programs cannot get into court unless that program is fortunate anough to have excess funds or a budget item which allows for payment of fees.

New Haven Legal Assistance is one of the few programs in the country, to my knowledge, which, over the years, has had some funds available for payment of court fees. They are limited funds; they are insufficient, but more importantly if a person has a constitutional right to walk into a court he should not have to go begging or soliciting or his attorney should not have to go soliciting to charitable or voluntary ad hoc agencies or governmental programs for something which

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Chai	the State of Connecticut is obligated to provide.		
2	Now, I submit to this Court		
3	Q That's the issue before us; isn't it?		
4	A Pardon?		
5	Q That's the issue before us; isn't it?		
6	Whether the state		
7	A That is correct.		
8	Q Whether they are obligated to do it without		
9	money.		
10	A And so that I maintain that Mr. Cannon's		
77	argument, or at least the burden of it missed the point of this		
12	appeal, which is that these Appellants don't have to go to		
13	charitable organizations which may or may not have funds to		
14	get something which the state is obligated to provide.		
15	Now, to go back to the point which Mr. Cannon, I		
16	guess was arguing: New Haven Legal Assistance does not have th		
17	funds for these Appellants. If they did, I would never have		
18	started this case; I wouldn't be here today.		
19	Q Did you ask for it?		
20	A I certainly did. Your Honor, these cases		
21	Q You asked the State of Connecticut to let you		
22	have the money to pay the fee out of that fund?		
23	A The State of Connecticut has no fund. There i		
24	no source for these fees		
25	Q What is the fund he's talking about?		

A The fund that he is talking about to the extent
I understood, related to a small fund from the welfare department for a pilot project in Middletown, jointly funded with
HEW. It has no bearing on these Appellants or on the rest of
the state.

The allegations in the affidavits in this record remain unchallenged and they remain true, that there is no place for these Appellants to go. Now, if this Court is concerned about the present financial status of these Appellants I will be happy to submit affidavits to this Court to persuade it that this case is still alive and not moot, but remanding this case after these applications sat in my office for six months and after this case has taken two-and-a-half years, I submit, would be cruel.

Q Are you taking the position, because I had an idea that the Federal Government did supply funds for necessary expenses, so much per month, and that it included in it all necessary expenses. Are you taking the position that if they do do that that you should be allowed to have us pass on this constitutional question now?

If I understand your argument, you are.

A First, of course, they don't do that, but if they did --

Q Well, I'm not talking about that. How do we know they don't?

A If there is such a regulation or such a program,
Mr. Cannon has had two-and-a-half years to refer to it in his
brief.

Q Suppose he had five years and the case comes up before us where we must decide a certain important constitutional question one way or another, depending upon whether certain facts are true. Would you object to it being remanded to the court to pass on this issue of whether or not the money was available to them from the relief funds?

A I would object to the posture of this case which has been in the Federal Courts for two-and-a-half years and the state has never once documented the argument which it has made more or less for the first time today.

Q Suppose it hasn't and we found out that's true; should we still go ahead and pass on the constitutional question, which perhaps will reach all the civil cases?

A The fact that the State has not raised any reference to any program or regulation --

Q Suppose they didn't raise it and we found it up here?

- A If you found it then I would suggest --
- Q -- in the Court?

A If it were a program clearly available to these Appellants, then perhaps it might moot this appeal and perhaps then a remand would be appropriate.

9 You mean an official program? 2 I mean an official program. You wouldn't concede that if the program were 3 2 wholly a private program? I certainly would not, Your Honor. These 50 Appellants don't have to go to charities to seek what is a 6 constitutional right. Po MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Well, if there are any 8 more questions, Counsel, your time is up, but you may respond 9 to any other questions. 10 If there are no other questions I think that --11 I think, if I may say so, you suggested that 12 you would supply some affidavits as to the ability of these 13 clients of your to get access to the courts in view of any 14 changed conditions. I, for one, would like to have those 15 affidavits. 16 Thank you. I will provide them within two 17 weeks, Your Honor? 18 Thank you. 19 Can you get something about the viewpoint or 20 the regulations of the Health Department of the Government --21 I would like the opportunity to submit a 22 supplemental brief on those, Your Honor. I feel strongly that 23 this case should not be remanded. 24 Of course, Mr. Cannon may submit any information 25

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that relates and bears on the issues that some members of the Court are concerned about; namely and specifically: whether any public authority in the State of Connecticut, either whether it's supported by the State of Connecticut or Federal or both, or indeed, separately any kind of authority. Whether that's relevant or not, we don't now know, but you may submit that material as well, Mr. Cannon.

MR. CANNON: Thank you, Your Honor.

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Of course each of you will exchange your information before it comes up here.

MR. LA FRANCE: Thank you, Your Honor.

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Thank you, Mr. La France; thank you, Mr. Cannon. The case is submitted, subject to those filings.

(Whereupon, at 2:40 o'clock p.m. the argument in the above-entitled matter was concluded)