

Agents Here Arrest 3 for Gas Book Sales

The State 9/6/42
Federal authorities arrested three Columbia men yesterday at the state office of price administration went into action against an alleged ring believed to have obtained gasoline ration coupon books and to have sold them for as much as \$100 each at a military supplies store on Main street.

Acting on a warrant sworn out by F. Carlisle Roberts, state OPA enforcement attorney, E. Mullins McLeod, United States deputy marshal here, took into custody yesterday afternoon Raymond Golden, about 40, secretary-treasurer of American Military stores here; Elbert L. Strawbridge, 22, a clerk of the store and a former employe of Granby mills; and Harvey C. Dean, 29, Strawbridge's brother-in-law who drives a kerosene truck for the Richland Oil company. The two brothers-in-law live in Gonzales Gardens.

United States Commissioner R. Beverly Sloan issued the warrant and the arrests were authorized by H. H. Edens, assistant United States district attorney. The prisoners were later released on \$2,000 bond each.

OPA Attorney Roberts indicated that the action yesterday was merely the first step in a statewide campaign against what is believed to be an organized ring engaged in widespread traffic in gasoline ration books and coupons. "There may be other arrests soon," he added.

When arrested, OPA inspectors found that Strawbridge had in his possession two "A" coupon books, both issued to the same automobile, as well as a quantity of loose "A" and "C" coupons.

It was indicated that the arrests yesterday may have closed off what was an apparently sizeable outlet for a very large and well-organized business in illegally acquired ration books. OPA investigators said that they had reason to believe that gross receipts for one week's sale of illegal coupons ran to approximately \$1,200.

The method of operation outlined in information made available to OPA was ingenious. It was alleged that when traveling salesmen came into Golden's store and began to complain about gasoline rationing, Golden would imply that he might know a man who could get them "a tank full of gas." Later, it was inferred, he would refer them to Strawbridge. Still later, Strawbridge would make the sale of the illegal coupons or books.

OPA attorneys and investigators would make no comment about the source of the coupons but indicated that they were tracing down several leads. They pointed out that alleged purchasers of the illegal coupons or books were always handed either loose coupons or books from which the covers had been torn.

The arrests climaxed several weeks of investigation and surveillance by Chief OPA Investigator Claude Scarborough and his staff.

The warrant under which the arrests were made charged that Golden, Strawbridge and Dean "did conspire to commit an offense against the United States, to wit; the violation of Title 3 of the Second War Powers act of congress of 1942 and Ration Order 5-a issued thereunder and to defraud the United States in the unlawful securing, disposition, and use of gasoline rationing coupons and one or more of them did do certain acts to effect the objects of such conspiracy."