

Thompson v Bridges [1925] 273 SW 529

The case is about slanderous claims regarding professional misconduct.

Evidence

The claimant was a teacher and principal of a high school. After the school obtained a trusteeship that consisted of the claimant's opponents, this committee gathered to investigate the case of the principal's misconduct in respect to older girls at his school. The respondents accused the claimant of poor conduct and inappropriate behavior towards the older girls in question. The principal's supporters were not allowed to speak on the claimant's behalf during these meetings. The respondents' claims made the claimant unfit for his position as a school teacher and principal.

Problematics

In their statement, the respondents made slanderous claims about the principal and presumed malice on his part. In return, the claimant expressed actual malice in response to the statement. It was unclear whether the principal expressed actual malice as a part of his professional misconduct or because the respondents' claims were slanderous.

Resolution

The court decided that the claims of the committee were in fact what pushed the claimant to express malice. However, if the claimant showed malice because he was prone to misconduct, the claims might be considered justified. The claimant acquired the right to prove that the claims had been false in order to restore his reputation.

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