

March 26, 1973

Skolnick missing, his aide says

By Barry Felcher

Legal researcher Sherman Skolnick and his driver were reported missing to Chicago police Monday by one of Skolnick's aides.

The aide, Leland Cole, said he feared that some federal agency had abducted Skolnick, 42, and his driver, David Hoffman, 31, because Skolnick's knowledge of the Watergate affair and other incidents that might embarrass the government.

Cole told Police Capt. Allan Michaels of the South Chicago District that Skolnick and Hoffman had left Skolnick's home at 9800 S. Oglesby at 8:15 a.m.

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Monday in a 1973 red Ford Pinto station wagon.

COLE SAID that Skolnick had left orders to be reported missing if he had not returned or telephoned Cole by 9 a.m. Monday. Cole said he waited until 10:15 a.m. before calling police.

Skolnick had said before he left that he was going to meet somebody to discuss former U.S. Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell's role in dropping an anti-trust suit against El Paso Natural Gas Co. and then allegedly becoming an El Paso stockholder, Cole said.

"This is tied in with the Watergate spying case," Cole contended. "I think the government grabbed him and his driver."

Cole said that Skolnick either had papers in his briefcase on the El Paso case or was going to be given papers on it by those he was to meet Monday.

COLE RECORDED a message on Skolnick's "Hotline News" telephone information service, urging the public to call federal agencies and demand that Skolnick and his driver be freed immediately.

Cole said he feared Skolnick had been "kidnaped" by federal authorities because of "the kidnapping" of another of Skolnick's aides, Alex J. Bottos Jr., 42, by U.S. marshals in the federal building in Hammond earlier this month.

Bottos was ordered indefinitely committed to the federal hospital at Springfield, Mo., for psychiatric examinations after the government charged he was suffering from

"extreme paranoia" and "delusions."

SKOLNICK, chairman of the Citizens Committee to Clean Up the Courts, told reporters at the time that Bottos had been working with his committee in northwest Indiana "in identifying state and federal judicial and related corruption."

Bottos was arrested Feb. 18, 1972, in Gary on charges of impersonating a federal officer while interviewing three citizens. He pleaded innocent last July 21.