

Flash 6/4/75

Hiss sues government

NEW YORK (AP) — Alger Hiss sued the federal government Thursday to force disclosure of still secret evidence he said may vindicate his claim he was telling the truth when he said he never spied for the Soviet Union.

Among other items, he wants copies of the famous "pumpkin papers," only a small part of which were made public at Hiss' spectacular trial 25 years ago.

He told a packed news conference that one of the Watergate tapes of a conversation between then President Richard M. Nixon and John Dean backs up his claim that a typewriter the government charged he used to produce incriminating documents was actually an FBI plant.

Hiss said there was a possibility that Nixon might be subpoenaed but that decision must await the government's reply to the suit.

Hiss said he waited until now to sue because "until the Freedom of Information Act was passed, I was doubtful if I had any standing."

The former high State Department official and president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace repeated his charge, "I was railroaded."

He was joined in his suit here by writer William A. Rueben who said the case against Hiss "was a total fraud from top to bottom. It was tainted with fraud or forgery."

Stephen W. Salant, who wrote a 1963 high school term paper on Hiss, entered a similar suit in Washington as did Dr. Peter H. Irons, a political science instructor at the University of Massachusetts, in Boston.

Irons said he had evidence the typewriter introduced at the trial was not the one used to write the documents and also charged that the microfilm found in the pumpkin papers was not manufactured in 1938 when Hiss allegedly used it.

The chief witness against Hiss was Whittaker Chambers, a former editor of Time magazine and a self-confessed Soviet agent. Chambers claimed Hiss had given him secret government papers.

"Largely because a young congressman named Nixon said he believed Chambers, I was convicted of perjury and went to jail for 44 months," Hiss said.

Hiss said that two of the five rolls of microfilm allegedly found in the pumpkin at Chambers' Westminster, Md., farm Dec. 2, 1948, were introduced in court, but he has never seen the other three.

Asked about this multiplicity of suits, Hiss said, "I am reopening in every way that's feasible. I am seeking evidence to reopen my case which I am sure will result in my vindication."

Nixon, as a young congressman, headed the House subcommittee which investigated the Hiss case. He has since credited the public acclaim he received as the major factor in his subsequent political rise.

A key exhibit in the case was a Woodstock typewriter on which the government claimed certain incriminating documents had been typed.

Hiss himself introduced the typewriter as an exhibit believing it would vindicate him.

He charged at his news conference, as he claimed at the trial, that the typewriter had been doctored and planted by the FBI to trap him.

"The assumption is we found a fake typewriter and we have concluded the FBI faked it," he said.

Hiss noted that Nixon, in the first edition of his book "My Six Crises," claimed the FBI found the typewriter, but changed it to say Hiss did in subsequent editions.