

Asylum in Canada

Fled U.S. to escape^k trap by FBI: Skolnick

THE CASE OF court critic Sherman H. Skolnick, feared kidnaped, reached comic opera proportions yesterday when he surfaced in a Windsor, Ont., motel, announced he had fled to Canada for political asylum, and then received an unsolicited pledge of amnesty if he chooses to return to Chicago.

The pledge was made by United States Atty. James R. Thompson in a telephone conversation with Skolnick.

Skolnick, 42, of 9800 S. Oglesby Av., explained in Canada that he had fled the country for fear he would be arrested or placed in a psychiatric ward for possessing documents he claims incriminate John N. Mitchell, former U. S. attorney general, in the Watergate bugging scandal.

"AMNESTY! I don't know what to make of it. It could be a trick," said Skolnick at a nonstop, day-long press conference in Windsor's Seaway Motor Inn, where he arrived at 12:20 a. m. yesterday with his chauffeur, David Hoffman, 30.

In Chicago, Thompson said he told Skolnick "he had my word that if he returned, no criminal charges would be placed against him and he would not be swept off the



Sherman Skolnick

streets into a mental hospital.

The prosecutor explained that he acted in reply to charges by Skolnick's aide, Leland Cole, that federal agents had kidnaped the court critic.

"THE CHARGES ARE absurd," he said. "My amnesty offer proves it."

Members of Skolnick's Committee to Clean Up the Courts reported to police Monday that he was missing. A search was started after Cole said Skolnick failed to telephone him after going to meet two men

to discuss purported links between Watergate and the Dec. 8 crash of a United Air Lines plane near Midway Airport.

Skolnick said yesterday he fled when he found the two men were disguised federal agents who he said were up to no good.

"WE GOT MONEY from them and drove day and night for three days," Skolnick said.

"They [the agents] threatened to wipe out me and members of my staff one by one by imprisoning us quite legally if I didn't turn over the Watergate-Mitchell documents," Skolnick said.

SKOLNICK SAID A circuitous route was taken to Canada to shake tailing "government operatives."

Windsor Police Chief Gordon Preston said he was perplexed by Skolnick's story and choice of Canada for asylum.

"Here is a man who says he fled quickly and that people are after him, and then shows up with quite a bit of luggage and calls in the press to tell everyone his whereabouts," said Preston.

Seaway manager Ted O'Hearn said his 150-unit motel has become a "a circus" since Skolnick checked in.