

Blackmail is suggested as goal in

By Arthur Siddon

Chicago Tribune Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18—The government prosecutor in the Watergate bugging trial said today blackmail may have been behind the wiretapping of Democratic National Committee headquarters last summer.

Earl Silbert, first assistant United States attorney, agreed to a suggested blackmail motive during a hearing before a three-judge panel in the U. S. Court of Appeals.

"Is the government interested in whether this information would be used to compromise

these people? That is a euphemism for blackmail," David Bazelon, chief judge of the Appellate Court, asked Silbert.

"WHY ELSE would a wiretapper be interested in, when they were doing some political wiretapping, be interested in information that was personal and of a private and confidential nature!" Silbert replied.

"Why didn't you indict them for it?" Bazelon asked the prosecutor.

"We believe this information goes to the motive and intent," Silbert replied. "It is

relative to the motive and intent of the parties involved."

The special Appeals Court hearing was called in the midst of the Watergate trial to consider a motion on behalf of Democratic Party officials to ban as evidence in the trial the conversations allegedly monitored by the defendants.

CHARLES MORGAN, attorney for the Democratic officials, had argued that to reveal the contents of the telephone conversations monitored by the allegedly Republican-financed defendants could

cause harm to Democrats who are not involved in the case.

When his motion was denied by the trial judge, John J. Sirica, chief judge of Federal District Court, Morgan took the matter directly to the Appeals Court bringing the Watergate trial to a dead stop until the matter is settled.

In a similar hearing before the Court of Appeals last week, Morgan himself said the government would try to prove blackmail as a motive.

"Mr. Silbert told me Hunt was trying to blackmail Spencer," Morgan told the court. "And I can prove it," Mor-

Watergate bugging case

11/19/73

gan quoted Silbert as saying.

E. HOWARD HUNT, a former White House consultant and retired agent for the Central Intelligence Agency, pleaded guilty last week to conspiracy, burglary, and violations of federal wiretap laws in connection with the case.

Spencer Oliver, executive director of the Association of Democratic State Chairmen, occupied the office in the Watergate office building where the allegedly tapped telephone was located.

Earlier this week five others, all from the Miami Cuban

community, followed Hunt's lead and pleaded guilty. Left on trial are G. Gordon Liddy, former White House aide and finance counsel for the Committee for the Reelection of the President, and James McCord Jr., former security chief of the committee.

IN CONGRESS today, Rep Edith Green [D., Ore.] told the House that the Office of Education approved a \$158,060 extension of a project directed by Hunt the day after Hunt was linked to the Watergate break-in.

The extension increased

\$738,543 the value of the contract.