

L.A. Times Asked to Produce Tapes On Key Witness in Watergate Trial

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Citing a "compelling need," attorneys for one of the defendants charged in connection with the bugging and break-in of the Democratic Party's Watergate headquarters asked a U.S. District Court judge to order the Los Angeles Times to turn over tapes and documents of an interview with a key government witness.

In a brief filed yesterday with the U.S. District Court here, lawyers for former White House aide E. Howard Hunt Jr. argued that "production of the evidence at this time is critical."

The lawyers are seeking tapes, transcripts and any other documents from more than five hours of interviews that two Los Angeles Times reporters conducted with Alfred C. Baldwin III, de-

scribed in the briefs as "the key government witness."

The Times articles, which also appeared in The Washington Post on Oct. 5 and Oct. 6, detail the role that Baldwin played in the alleged bugging of the Democratic National Committee headquarters here. According to his account, Baldwin was employed to monitor electronically telephone conversations in the headquarters.

Chief U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica has indicated that he will grant the subpoena. Hunt's lawyers are seeking the material from the Times because Baldwin has filed an affidavit swearing that he destroyed his own tapes of the interviews.

The Times has announced that it will oppose any attempt to subpoena material relating to the interviews.

The proposed subpoena sub-

mitted for Sirica's signature names David J. Kraslow as the Washington bureau chief of the Times and calls upon him to bring the materials to court on Dec. 19. Kraslow, who was the Times' Washington bureau chief, left the Times in August to become an assistant managing editor for the Washington Evening Star and News.

The brief asserts that the Supreme Court has rejected any privilege for journalists claiming protection under the First Amendment from testifying in a legal proceeding. The "most compelling argument in favor of a privilege for newspapers is that sources of news information will vanish if their names are disclosed," the brief says.

This argument is inapplicable in the immediate situation, the brief says, since Baldwin's identity as the source was announced in the articles.