

PRESS

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KPFA

Surrenders A Message

The general manager of Berkeley radio station KPFA turned over to a federal grand jury yesterday an original message from the New World Liberation Front claiming responsibility for planting a pipe bomb in front of the KRON-TV building on February 6.

Larry Bensky told a press conference that Pacifica Foundation, which operates KPFA, had decided that lawfully obtained subpoenas would have to be obeyed.

Bensky said the decision was made after a long and expensive process of carrying a similar case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

That case, which the Supreme Court declined to hear, involved Will Lewis, station manager of KPFA, in Los Angeles, also owned by Pacifica Foundation.

Lewis had refused to obey a similar subpoena for material supposed to be from the Weather Underground and the Symbionese Liberation Army and had spent several weeks in jail.

Bensky said yesterday although he was turning over the latest message, he felt it set a dangerous precedent for the media.

Bensky urged the media to seek federal protection from grand jury subpoenas.

"I am here this afternoon to comply with this subpoena because I have no choice," Bensky said.

"In a few minutes I will turn over the original communique from the New World Liberation Front to a federal grand jury.

"But I want the press and public to understand what such compliance means. It means that information submitted in confidence to KPFA now becomes government property.

"It means that the grand jury is now in our newsroom

and potentially in yours, as well.

"It means that following the Nixon - Mitchell era erosions of press freedom in the cases of Earl Caldwell of the New York Times, the Brandsberg decisions in Tennessee, and a number of other cases, we now must consider methods for protection of sources, if we are to continue to have sources other than official spokespeople for the government and its police."

The grand jury is now conducting an investigation into recent bombings in the Bay Area.