

Some conversations went unrecorded

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Secret Service technician told the Watergate cover-up trial Wednesday that portions of presidential conversations sometimes went unrecorded while a tape was being changed.

James G. Baker testified that his duties included changing the tapes upon which presidential conversations were recorded and also servicing the machines at the White House when Richard M. Nixon was president.

He said that when a reel of tape was about to run out he shut off the recorder, losing perhaps three minutes of conversation while changing to a fresh reel.

He said that procedure was followed on orders of his supervisor, Raymond Zumwalt. Baker said he was told to do it that way rather than switch to a backup machine which could have enabled him to change the reel without losing any of the conversation.

"It didn't seem a very efficient way of

doing things, did it?" asked John J. Wilson, attorney for H.R. Haldeman.

"No sir," replied Baker.

"You were deliberately making a choice not to record part of them?" Wilson asked.

"Yes, sir," Baker said.

The technician added that he could not say how often.

Prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste asked Baker if he ever knew who was talking when he changed a reel.

"No, sir," Baker replied.

Earlier, three defense attorneys contended the prosecution had gained an unfair advantage when it came up with an E. Howard Hunt memorandum last weekend, which all parties believed no longer existed.

Lawyers for former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell and ex-White House aide John D. Ehrlichman asked U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica to declare a mistrial.

Kenneth W. Parkinson's attorney

asked the judge to grant his client a separate trial.

"We urge the court to rescue Mr. Parkinson from a sea of prejudice which cannot be overcome short of severance," wrote Jacob Stein, defense counsel for Parkinson.

Sirica has given the prosecutors until Friday to reply.

In a dramatic announcement on Monday, prosecutor James F. Neal said that over the weekend William O. Bitman, one time lawyer for Hunt, had turned over a copy of Hunt's two and one-half page memorandum dated Nov. 14, 1972.

Bitman earlier had denied he ever

received the memo which Hunt testified he gave him for relay to Parkinson. Parkinson had said he knew nothing about the memo which outlined demands of the Watergate break-in defendants for money and assurances they would not have to serve long prison terms.

Lawyers for Mitchell and Ehrlichman told Sirica they had based their defense on their expectation of being able to call Bitman as a witness to discredit Hunt's testimony.

Stein said Parkinson's defense was based partly on the belief Hunt never wrote such a memorandum.