

23 August 1972

Judge Seals 'Watergate' Testimony

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge has ruled that all pretrial testimony in the Democrats' \$1 million suit in connection with the alleged break-in of their national headquarters must be kept from the public until a grand jury completes its probe of possible criminal charges in connection with the case.

U.S. Dist. Court Judge Charles R. Richey said he made the ruling because he thought it possible that persons not yet charged by the grand jury will be indicted.

He said his secrecy seal will apply to the statements of former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell and Nixon's campaign finance director, Maurice Stans.

Richey's decision amounted to a shift from a ruling 11

days ago and makes it improbable that sworn statements taken from high-level Nixon officials will be made public until after this fall's general election.

On Aug. 11, ruling against requests to delay the suit, Richey held that statements of only the specific persons involved in a criminal suit arising out of the alleged break-in be kept secret.

The Democrats have charged that their civil rights were violated by the June 17 break-in and alleged attempted bugging in the posh Watergate hotel-office complex.

Five persons were arrested in the building. Some of those arrested had links to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

Richey said he would be willing to make public the testimony of those persons who are not eventually charged by the grand jury "so long as it has no bearing on the criminal investigation."

NO SI