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Newsman's Group to Examine Subpoena Question

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WASHINGTON, March 8—A group of newspaper, television and magazine reporters announced the formation today of a professional committee to examine and defend their rights in answering the subpoenas of Government prosecutors.

A spokesman for the group said that the Reporters Committee on Freedom of the Press had not yet defined the rights of journalists and was not making any general recommendations to reporters whose notes and film are subpoenaed.

The group met this afternoon with legal specialists and will now seek private funds for further study of the issue. It is also organizing a clearing house for information and assistance to reporters at the Institute of Criminal Law and Procedure, affiliated with the Georgetown University Law School here.

The committee declared today in a statement: "As state

Reporters Group Will Study Rights of Journalists in Keeping Sources Secret

and Federal prosecutors move with increasing vigor against dissident groups, a serious question has arisen concerning the relationship between newsmen and the courts.

"A number of subpoenas seeking the disclosure of confidential information and sources have been served on newsmen recently, endangering the delicate process through which news is often gathered and disseminated to the public."

'Destroys Trust'

"The practical effect of such court-ordered testimony," the statement continued, "is to destroy whatever trust newsmen have developed among sources who can provide information not otherwise available to the general public."

The committee noted that the

Justice Department's broader use of subpoenas against newsmen had drawn "critical comment" from publishers and broadcast organizations, including The New York Times, the Columbia Broadcasting System, Time, Inc., and Newsweek magazine.

"We welcome this concern," the committee said, "but ultimately a stand must be taken by the men and women directly involved in the gathering of news—the reporters."

Members of the committee, who said they were acting as individuals and not for their organizations, are: James S. Dyle and Barry Kalb of The Washington Evening Star; Murray Fromson and Bill Stoute of C.B.S. News; Fred P. Graham, John Kifner and J. Anthony Lukas of The New York Times; Don Johnson of Newsweek; Robert Maynard of the Washington Post; Jack Nelson of The Los Angeles Times; Charles Quinn and Lem Tucker of N.B.C. News, and Marvin Zim of Time magazine.