

Another Newsmen Jailed --Withholding Sources



AP Wirephoto
JOHN F. LAWRENCE
He withheld tapes

Washington

The Washington bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times was jailed for three hours for contempt yesterday when he refused to give a federal judge the tape recordings of an interview with a principal witness in the forthcoming Watergate political espionage trial.

John F. Lawrence, who recently became head of the Times' bureau here, was led out of U.S. District Court in the custody of a federal marshal after Judge John Sirica ruled that a subpoena for the tapes was valid. Lawrence had told the court the tapes were in his possession, but he had no authority from his newspaper to turn them over.

The Times immediately filed an appeal and the U.S. Court of Appeals freed Lawrence from his temporary cell at the U.S. marshal's headquarters, pending a hearing at 9:15 a.m. EST today.

STATEMENT

In a statement from Los Angeles, Times publisher Otis Chandler said:

"We were shocked and astounded at the court's abrupt action in jailing John Lawrence in an important matter involving constitutional issues. . . ."

Lawrence was the latest newspaperman jailed in a growing conflict between the press and the judiciary resulting from a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that newspapermen have no rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution to protect their news sources when a grand jury demands that they produce confidential information.

Another Los Angeles Times reporter, William Farr, is in jail and a reporter for the Newark Evening News, Peter Bridge, was fe-

cently released in a case involving similar offenses.

The Lawrence case was a result of an interview with Alfred C. Baldwin III that the Times published on October 5, in which Baldwin said he had monitored telephone conversations at the Democratic national committee from a motel across the street on behalf of the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

BACKGROUND

Baldwin now is expected to become a key government witness in the trial of seven men accused in connection with the burglary at the Democrats' headquarters at the Watergate Apartments and the alleged bugging of the telephones.

The defendants' lawyers, contending that the tapes were needed in the defense of the case when trial begins, demanded that they be subpoenaed and, last week, subpoenas were served on the Times and the reporters who conducted the interview with Baldwin, Ronald Ostrow and Jack Nelson.

The government, in a brief filed with Sirica last Wednesday, said it would not object if he decided to issue the subpoena and that it saw no constitutional obstacles to his doing so. At the same time, it said appeals by the newspaper were likely.

In an all day hearing yesterday, the Times urged Sirica to quash the subpoena, contending it was a "drastic inhibition of the press" that would cause news sources in the future not to talk with newsmen freely for fear their conversations would be revealed in later litigation.

But Sirica ruled otherwise, contending that the Times was not immune from the subpoena because the name of its news source, Baldwin, had already been revealed.

Later Lawrence, a slight

bespectacled man, told newsmen he had never been in court before, let alone jail.

"My father was in this business 45 years before I was and I've been in it 17 years," he said. "I think what has happened today is something the American press has got to think about."

United Press