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1-P
M.S.-Press Comments

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6—THE WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1947

Probe of 'Gag' Regulations Due for Test Next Week

By Scripps-Howard Newspapers

A congressional inquiry into proposed military censorship in non-military Government agencies appeared today headed for a showdown between the Veterans Administration and authors of the controversial "gag" regulations.

William J. Driver, administrative assistant to Gen. Omar N. Bradley, is expected to take the stand when hearings are resumed next week.

The Veterans Administration twice attempted to invoke security regulations suggested by the State-War-Navy-Air Force Security Control Board. They were suspended last on Nov. 5 after Hamilton Robinson, Security Control Board Chairman, told Mr. Driver they were not effective until signed by the President.

Security Board sources say the Veterans Administration jumped the gun in establishing proposed minimum standards under the President's loyalty program without legal authority. They insist the regulations were sent to the Veterans Administration and other Government agencies only for "advice and comment."

The Veterans Administration is said to be anxious to give its version. One source said the agency was told by the Security Control Board the proposed regulations could be considered a presidential directive, and the Veterans Administration was urged to set them up as a "criterion" for other agencies.

IS SOMEONE UNTRUTHFUL?

Rep. George Bender (R., O.), whose protests resulted in the Houk investigation, said he would go into the controversy in detail. "Obviously, someone isn't telling the truth," Mr. Bender said.

Mr. Robinson and his colleagues—Col. Charles Blakeney of Army Intelligence and Lieut. Comdr. Leroy Lichliter of Naval Operations—withstood a barrage of questions still insisting they had no choice but to draft minimum security standards under the President's loyalty order.

DENIES COMMENT

Mr. Robinson insisted the proposed regulations were "unfinished

business" and for that reason there had been no public discussion. He denied he ever told newspapermen that "public officials should decide" what information is given the general public.

In response to a direct question by Mr. Zender, Mr. Robinson said he "believed in freedom of the press without reservation, of course, on your interpretation of the word."

Members of the board made a point that the regulations had been modified since the American Society of Newspaper Editors entered a formal protest Oct. 25. Mr. Robinson said the modifications—elimination of the right to restrict material "which might cause administrative difficulty or embarrassment"—were made as a result of protests.

PERMIT COVER-UP

Jim G. Lucas, Scripps-Howard staff writer, testified that newspapermen were not satisfied with the modifications because they still permit restriction of material which might affect the "prestige" of the Government. He said "this could include everything, and would permit another Albert Fall to hide another Teapot Dome."

Mr. Bender was critical of "the military mind." Chairman Clare Hoffman (R., Mich.) charged the

board "wants to set up a bunch of little dictators all over Washington." Rep. Frank M. Karsten (D., Mo.) defended the regulations on the grounds that "some sort of security is necessary" and protests were "exaggerated and overdrawn."

MS
Newspaper
clippings
SAB

From the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune - October 19, 1947

--EXCLUSIVE--

MOVE SEEKS TO RESTORE WARTIME GAG

By Nat Finney

WASHINGTON - The Truman administration is about to put the ordinary affairs of federal civilian agencies under a secrecy blanket modeled after wartime military security.

This was learned Saturday from Hamilton Robinson, chairman of the security advisory board of the state, war and navy department co-ordinating committee after a directive imposing secrecy upon the operations of the veterans administration "leaked".

The rules of secrecy have been drafted, but they are themselves marked "secret" until President Truman issues the White House directive that will make them binding in all departments.

When the White House Directive is issued--if it is not blocked--the secrecy rules will be sent to all federal agencies. The rules as drafted are "minimum" secrecy rules. And by clear implication individual departments can make them stricter under the expected presidential directive, if they so desire.

INVOLVES "CONFIDENTIAL" DATA

The heart of the new secrecy rules, as disclosed by the veterans administration directive, involves so-called "confidential" information.

Confidential information is "information the unauthorized disclosure of which, although not endangering the national security, would be prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the nation, any governmental activity, or an individual; or would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty".

The veterans administration code of secrecy goes even farther to authorize classification of routine information as "restricted" information.

"Restricted information

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"Restricted information is information which should not be published or communicated to anyone except for official purposes", the rule reads. Chairman Robinson made no bones about the fact that means any information any federal administrative official does not wish to give out, whatever his reasons may be.

Robinson supplied a concrete example of what the restricted information rule means. He had in his hands a copy of the state department's secrecy regulations, described by him as "severe as the wartime army and navy regulations".

STILL "SECRET" TO REPORTER

This document, printed by the government printing office, had the words "for official use only" printed on its cover. Mr. Robinson was unable to hand the document to this reporter.

The veterans administration's definition of the term information makes it mean whatever department officials want it to mean:

"The term information as used herein shall include all documents or other materials which convey information requiring provisions for safeguarding".

The secrecy directive that has been drafted and secretly circulated to the heads of federal civil agencies is based on a "sleeper" paragraph in President Truman's executive order 9835 which was titled "Prescribing procedures for the administration of an employee loyalty program in the executive branch of the government".

In the final part of the directive, under the heading "miscellaneous", the directive reads:

"The security advisory board of the state-war-navy co-ordinating committee shall draft rules applicable to the handling and transmission of confidential documents and other documents and information which should not be publicly disclosed, and upon approval by the President such rules shall constitute the minimum standards for the handling and transmission of such documents and information and shall be applicable to all departments and agencies of the executive branch".

Under this

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Under this directive, which passed unnoticed at the time it was issued, the security advisory board has worked for nearly eight months drafting and redrafting so-called security regulations for the civilian departments.

Meanwhile, the state department, which has become increasingly mum about current affairs under Secretary George C. Marshall, put through its own regulations in anticipation of eventual issuance of government minimum regulations.

DEPARTMENTS DENY KNOWLEDGE

It is under these state department regulations that the state department has imposed close secrecy over details of Marshall plan discussions, not only on its own officials, but upon commerce, agriculture and treasury department officials.

Although Chairman Robinson said without hesitation that the proposed secrecy rules have been submitted to all civil departments for comment, inquiries made at the departments themselves brought denials of any knowledge of what was afoot.

At the commerce department a request for a copy of the department's secrecy rules Friday was readily granted, at first. But something happened while the inquiring reporter waited and eventually the same information man who had readily agreed to hand over a copy of the rules denied knowledge of their existence.

Other departments either denied knowledge of the pending rules, or asked for time to look the matter up-- and failed to get around to it.

Chairman Robinson says, however, that the protests he expected from civil departments when the draft copy of minimum regulations was circulated didn't amount to anywhere nearly as much as he anticipated.

The veterans administration regulations, which are said to be closely parallel to the minimum regulations that have been handed to President Truman for his approval, follow the army and navy pattern.

These rules disclose that they were adopted at a request from the security advisory board; "Pursuant to

the request

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the request of the security advisory board, state-war-navy co-ordinating committee, the (veterans bureau) administrator has designated the assistant administrator for contact and administrative services as the (security) officer for the veterans administration", the document reads.

An unusual point in the veterans administration rules, presumably also a part of the general regulations waiting Mr. Truman's okay, is that it muzzles employes on questions involved in pending legislation.

"Legislative information, particularly information pertaining to pending legislation, which is contained in the files of the office of assistant administrator for legislation, or elsewhere in the veterans administration, is held confidential", the rule reads.

Chairman Robinson was frank to say that neither this nor other secrecy rules would be effective if a member of congress asked for the information. He'd get it. But if a newspaper reporter asked for it in preparing a story about veterans administration views on pending legislation he would be refused on grounds the information was "classified as confidential".

Although the veterans administration has no functions involving high military matters, its rules provide for classifying information as "top secret", a classification reserved in military practice for information that can be communicated only by cryptographic code and is intended only for the eyes of the highest brass.

Under the official definition, top secret information is information the security aspect of which is paramount, and the unauthorized disclosure of which would cause exceptionally grave damage to the nation.

EVEN "SECRET" ORDERS SECRET

Secret information under the VA classification system is "information the unauthorized disclosure of which would endanger national security, or cause serious injury to the interests or prestige of the nation or any governmental activity thereof".

If the state department security regulations are a guide--and Mr. Robinson did not disclaim this is the

case--

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case--the regulations for secrecy are themselves to be secret.

Mr. Robinson placed considerable stress on the fact that the regulations in prospect are "only minimum" regulations. He indicated that the expected presidential directive will authorize heads of departments to go as far as they like in putting the lid on disclosure of information about public business to the public.

To Chairman Robinson the question of whether or not the Truman administration is right in rubber-stamping secrecy into executive department business hinges on who should say whether or not information ought to be published.

Mr. Robinson thought that public officials should decide what the public ought to be told, and what, for the public's own good, it should not be told.

An information employe in the department of commerce had a different explanation.

"You know yourself", he said, "that we're just as much at war with Russia now as we were at war with Germany in 1937. And everybody knows that we kept secret a lot that we were doing back in those days."

*Wash
Star 11/12*

Information Lacking On Report of Truman 'Censorship Screen'

Extent of Departmental
Order on Agency News
Still Seen as Mystery

By David Lawrence

There is still considerable mystery over whether President Truman is permitting a censorship screen to function on the matter of information to the public.

A proposed regulation to bottle up news which had been put into effect already in the Veterans Administration, was considered for possible use in other governmental agencies. A protest by the American Society of Newspaper Editors to President Truman brought a change in the language of the regulation but no information as to what was meant by the revised language, which still indicates that a Government employe may be dismissed for giving out information that might possibly embarrass some individual in the Government.

President Truman told a press conference that there had been much ado about nothing. He indicated that the matter of the regulations themselves was not as serious as had been supposed by the press. He intimated that the press should have ignored the matter because he, of course, would not allow any censorship at the source to be invoked.

Still No Information.

Mr. Truman's expressions of purpose were welcomed by the press, but there is still no information as to just what the status of these recommendations happens to be, and to what extent instructions have been issued inside the governmental departments to withhold information which might be embarrassing to individuals from a political standpoint.

The incident now has attracted the attention of Congress. Representative George H. Bender, Republican Congress member-at-large from Ohio, has issued a statement declaring that a committee of Congress should make an investigation of the whole affair. Mr. Bender says:

"I am increasingly concerned over the encroachments of militarism into our civilian life and the imposition by the Truman administration of military controls upon the normal functions of Government and upon the free flow of news.

"Today I examined the text of proposed regulations drafted by the Truman administration to apply military restrictions on any information and documents of the civilian agencies of the Government. One of these regulations, it is reported, was put into effect in the Veterans Administration. The other, prepared by an interdepartmental committee for Mr. Truman's signature, would extend this 'protective' censorship over the remainder of the Federal agencies by allowing them to classify as 'secret' or 'restricted' any sort of information affecting the so-called prestige of the agency.

"Any employe of the Government who did not respect this classification, however absurd the classification might be, would be subject to dismissal for 'disloyalty.' It is inconceivable to me that there is any statute or authority which would permit the agencies of the Government to cut off the free flow of information in this manner.

Sees Cloak for Bungling.

"Even during the war no such sweeping restrictions were imposed. The effect of the proposed regulations would be to cloak with secrecy all administrative bungling and incompetence. Military censorship is alien to our whole American

basic statistics and information collected by the United States Government.

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"Even during the war no such sweeping restrictions were imposed. The effect of the proposed regulations would be to cloak with secrecy all administrative bungling and incompetence. Military censorship abhorrent to our whole American way of life could be applied to the basic statistics and information collected by the United States Government.

"It was reported that, at his press conference on September 6, President Truman 'criticized the press of this nation for taking what he called fragmentary reports and setting them up as straw men and then knocking them down.' President Truman said further that the press did not have full and correct information on this censorship project. But he apparently did not supply the full and correct information on that occasion. The secrecy with which the Truman administration has tried to clothe its activities makes doubly unfair the President's indictment of the American press for using fragmentary bits of information. Any proposal which threatens the freedom of the press cannot be left to rumor and speculation. It is vital to the welfare of this nation that Congress determine the exact origin and status of the censorship program and the legal basis for the Truman administration efforts to date along these lines.

"Accordingly, I have suggested to the chairman of the House Expenditures Committee that the entire matter be looked into, and I have offered assistance in every way possible. I am also making available at this time copies of the documents furnished to me as true drafts of the censorship regulations."

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Security Rules Could Result in Censorship

Truman Must Approve
But VA Has Already
Invoked Part of Plan

Should Government agencies treat as "confidential" all documents and information which, if disclosed, "would cause serious administrative embarrassment or difficulty"?

How, in such a case, is the public to learn about matters that are potentially embarrassing to Government officials?

These questions arose yesterday when The Washington Post learned that such a rule may be applied to all Government departments and agencies. It has been written into the draft of a set of rules for the handling and transmission of "confidential documents and other documents and information which should not be publicly disclosed."

VA Invokes Rules

The draft was prepared by the security advisory board of the State, War, Navy coordinating committee of which Hamilton Robinson is chairman. If the draft is approved by President Truman, the rules will become the "minimum standards" throughout the Government and will apply to all departments and agencies.

The Veterans Administration, however, already has invoked some of the Security Advisory Board's tentative rules. In Circular No. 61, issued by VA on July 29, 1947, appears this definition:

"Confidential information is information the unauthorized disclosure of which, although not endangering the national security, would be prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the Nation, any governmental activity, or an individual; or would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

Other VA Definitions

Other definitions in the Veterans Administration are "top secret information," "secret information" and "restricted information." Top secret information is defined as something which, if disclosed, would "cause exceptionally grave damage to the Nation." Secret information is defined as something the disclosure

See SECURITY, Page 3, Column 1

SECURITY—From Page 1

Proposed Security Rules Cover Official Embarrassment

of which would cause "serious injury to the interests or prestige of the Nation . . ."

William J. Driver, a special assistant at the Veterans Administration, said the definitions in the VA circular were based on correspondence with the Security Advisory Board of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee.

He said that thus far the Veterans Administration has no documents that rate classifications such as top secret, secret or confidential.

Definitions Substantially Alike

Robinson, the State Department officer who heads the Security Advisory Board of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, was asked whether the VA definition of "confidential information" tallied with his board's. At first he doubted it. After a check, however, he found they were substantially the same.

One difference was this: Whereas the VA definition said that confidential information included anything that would "cause administrative embarrassment," the Safety Board's definition read "serious administrative embarrassment."

Robinson said he could see how a newspaperman might suspect that this was a possible device to help an official to "cover up" something unworthy.

He insisted, however, that such a thing was far from the thoughts of those who did the drafting.

Integrity Assumed

"We had to assume integrity on the part of administrative officials," Robinson said.

He said that there was no intention of setting up a Gestapo in the Government; that, actually, the board hoped to declassify many documents that already were marked "top secret" and "secret." He said he felt that this had been overdone in the past.

The real purpose of a standard code throughout the Government, Robinson said, was to make it possible for the Army, the Navy or the Atomic Energy Commission to

transmit a document to some other department or agency and not have to worry about national security being jeopardized by a disclosure of the document.

He said that the board's job really was a "mechanical" one, that of drawing up rules. He pointed out that this was the board's only assignment and that it had no power to put the rules into effect. Only an executive order from the White House can do that.

Executive Authority

The Security Advisory Board has been drafting and redrafting a code of standard rules for nearly eight months. Its authority flows from President Truman's executive order No. 9835, which was titled "Prescribing procedures for the administration of an employees loyalty program in the executive branch of the Government."

The final part of the executive order, little noticed at the time, read:

"The Security Advisory Board of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee shall draft rules applicable to the handling and transmission of confidential documents and other documents and information which should not be publicly disclosed, and upon approval by the President such rules shall constitute the minimum standards for the handling and transmission of such documents and information, and shall be applicable to all departments and agencies of the executive branch."

Wash
Star 10/23/47

'Military Mind' is Seen In Plan for New Form Of Civilian Censorship

'Security' Regulations
Code to Be Put Before
President Shortly

By David Lawrence

The influence of the "military mind" is slowly but surely making itself felt in the American Government.

A new form of censorship at the source is contemplated. If put into effect, it will be applied to the entire civilian government. It will tend to squelch criticism of the Government and also will set off a chain reaction of disbelief throughout the country in what the Government does say.

President Truman will have before him shortly a set of regulations drafted for him by subordinates. The ostensible objective is "security"—a phrase which was used for many purposes during the war and not always with a military need.

The definition of "confidential information" in the draft of the proposed regulations for the handling and transmission of such information runs as follows:

"Confidential information is information the unauthorized disclosure of which, although not endangering the national security, would be prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the Nation, any governmental activity, or an individual; or would cause serious administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

Origin and Design.

This originated, to be sure, out of the requirements of the President's Loyalty Committee dealing with communism and is designed to enable Government officials to transmit documents to one another without fear of unauthorized disclosure.

During the war no censorship law was deemed necessary, as the press exercised a voluntary censorship. Various efforts have been made from time to time to get Congress to pass bills governing "unauthorized disclosures" and the present statutes take care of the situation adequately insofar as it concerns disclosure by a Government employe of the contents of any confidential document to an outsider.

But there is a line of demarcation between truly secret documents which have a "security" meaning and the careless labeling as "confidential" or "secret" of anything which some bureaucrat merely wants.

to keep away from the eyes of a vigilant press.

It would be very difficult for a Government employe to talk to any member of the press if he felt he might be dismissed because the information imparted would in the judgment of his superior be construed as likely "to cause serious administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

Also it cannot be left to Government employes to decide what would or would not be "prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the Nation, any governmental activity, or an individual."

Plainly, there never was a better scheme to cover up fraud and scandal in Government, as well as bad administration, than the proposed regulation: Miscreants could readily hide behind such a censorship wall.

Incredible, If Approved.

It would be incredible if President Truman ever approved any such language. If he did, he might find himself on the defensive in the next political campaign. He might also find congressional investigating committees boring into the subject quite extensively, with consequent publicity that would not be politically helpful to an administration seeking continuance in office beyond 1948.

It may be confidently expected that Mr. Truman will emasculate the regulation and confine it to the unauthorized disclosure of documents marked as "restricted" by someone high enough up in a Government department to distinguish between public and private information.

What is more important than the language ultimately to be used in such a regulation is that the draft quoted above should emerge at all. Certainly it would be the sheerest hypocrisy for American officials to prate about the "iron curtain" and restrictions imposed by the Russians and at the same time issue an edict virtually forbidding Government employes to talk to the press. Censorship at the source can be far more effective in suppressing the truth than actual censorship before publication. For if the press cannot get the information in the first instance, there would be little for a Government censor to pass upon.

Sooner or later the "military minds" in our Government must discover that the Bill of Rights really means freedom to gather information to which the people are entitled and that, in peacetime at least, Government must be able so to conduct its affairs administratively as to protect really secret information from leaking out. It is a simple problem to train Government officials how to use the ordinary rules of discretion or common sense. Threats of dismissal on "loyalty" issues are superfluous where the officials in charge of information are possessed of an understanding of what is or is not dangerous to tell the press.

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Free Press Imperiled By U. S. News Curb, Reporter Testifies

By the Associated Press

A Washington correspondent testified yesterday he believes President Truman plans to restrict information from Government offices "despite the universal disapproval of the American press."

Chairman Hoffman of the House Expenditures Committee said such restrictions, proposed in the form of "classifying information," would amount to a "vicious censorship."

The writer, Nat S. Finney, told an expenditures subcommittee that press freedom is endangered by the proposed regulations. They would permit the classifying of information as "top secret," "secret," "confidential" or "restricted."

Mr. Hoffman told Mr. Finney: "If the press keeps up its campaign against the proposal, it might be able to stop it. I'm afraid Congress won't. Because if the administration puts on the heat, as it has done before, saying this is necessary for national defense, it will frighten Congress into doing nothing."

Depend Upon Congress.

Mr. Finney said, "We're depending on Congress."

Mr. Finney, Washington correspondent for the Minneapolis Star and Tribune and Des Moines Register and Tribune, broke the story on the plan to adopt the news classification program in executive departments.

He has been given the Raymond Clapper Memorial Award for breaking the story. Mr. Truman made the presentation last Saturday.

The information regulations were prepared by the Security Advisory Board of the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Co-ordinating Committee Hamilton Robinson, director of the State Department's Office of Controls, is chairman of the top security agency.

Mr. Robinson told him, Mr. Finney testified, that he believes public officials should have power "to give or withhold information, deciding what the public should be told."

Says President "Boxed Ears."

"I expected," Mr. Finney testified, "that Mr. Truman would put a stop to the thing and that would be the end of it. Instead, the President verbally boxed my ears when I asked a press conference question about the matter, calling it a very bad habit of the press to disclose things."

Carlton Skinner, director of information for the Interior Department, told the committee he believes a final draft of the proposed information classification, with proper administration, could be adopted without imposing censorship.

He pointed out the Interior Department has information on mineral surveys of other countries, including materials used in the production of atomic bombs, and certain information on petroleum reserves. This information, he said, should be restricted for national security.

Only War C Of Reds, Mi

By the Associated Press

NEW YORK, Mar. 11.—No short of war, under existing conditions, can free his country from domination by Communists, former King Mihai of Romania says.

The handsome, 26-year-old ex-monarch, accompanied by his mother Queen Helen, arrived late yesterday aboard the Queen Elizabeth for his first visit to the United States. He plans to remain two or three weeks.

Mihai, who told reporters that his abdication last December 30 was forced by Romanian Communists, said he still considers himself Romania's rightful ruler and believes his countrymen in general remain loyal to him.

Some 150 reporters and photographers greeted the royal pair as the giant liner crept up the bay from quarantine. Poised and genial, Mihai answered the hail of questions from his interviewers in a low, soft voice and clipped British accent. Occasionally during the mass interview, Queen Helen interpolated a remark.

The former King indicated he hoped to regain his throne but when asked how he hoped to attain this aim, replied: "I wouldn't know."

As to reports that he might establish a government-in-exile, Mihai said: "I never thought of anything like that."

He made it clear he intended to go ahead with plans for his marriage to Princess Anne of Bourbon-

Editors Hit 'Gag' Rule in Security Plan

Cleveland, Oct. 26 (AP).—Directors of the American Society of Newspaper Editors today denounced an attempt to implement the President's loyalty order of last March with directives which the editors said "would place even the ordinary affairs of Federal civilian agencies beyond public scrutiny."

Concluding a two-day meeting, the ASNE board passed a resolution opposing security regulations prepared by the Security Advisory Board.

These regulations, the resolution said, already are embodied in a directive for guidance of the Veterans' Administration and that directive "evidently is a pattern for directives to be issued to other Federal agencies."

The language of the directive "could be used to deprive the public of information to which it is entitled," the resolution went on. "While the announced purpose of the President's loyalty order is to protect the Nation in the difficult international situation which now exists, the VA directive classes as confidential information which does not affect the national security."

Without questioning the purpose of the President's loyalty order, the board urged the President "to nullify the VA gag rule and to strike any such rule out of the regulations for other departments."

The directors today elected to ASNE membership under the distinguished service to journalism clause in the society's constitution, Roscoe Drummond, Washington correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor; Arthus Krock, New York Times Washington correspondent; and Walter Lippmann of the New York Herald-Tribune.

Among those attending the board meeting were B. M. McKelway, editor of the Washington Star; Alexander F. Jones, assistant to the publisher of The Washington Post; and David Lawrence, editor of the United States News in Washington.

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Truman Must Approve But VA Has Already Invoked Part of Plan

Should Government agencies treat as "confidential" all documents and information which, if disclosed, "would cause serious administrative embarrassment or difficulty"?

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Daily Worker

New York, Wednesday, October 29, 1947

GOV'T FORCED TO RESCIND GAG ON NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28.—President Truman's Security Advisory Board today dropped its sweeping news censorship plans. Protests yesterday by the American Society of Newspaper Editors revealed the distance the government has travelled in the direction of "gag rule."

The board, set up earlier this year as part of Truman's "loyalty" purge of federal employes, had established four classifications of government information, top secret, secret, confidential and restricted.

The "top secret" classification, as first conceived by the Board, required withholding of information disclosure of which would "cause exceptionally grave damage to the prestige of the nation or any government activity thereof." The all-embracing term "prestige" could serve as the basis for keeping from the American people the truth of almost any matter of concern to them.

"Confidential" information was established as that whose publication would similarly impair "prestige or

cause "serious administration embarrassment."

The Security Board today announced it has changed the "top secret" classification by deleting the "prestige of any government activity" clause, and the "confidential" classification by dropping the "administration embarrassment" proviso.

The action was taken after the American Society of Newspaper Editors board of directors in Cleveland yesterday rapped similar gag directives handed down by the Veterans Administration last March.

The ASNE said the directive was "evidently a pattern for directives to be issued to other federal agencies.

While the Security Board has toned down the all-inclusive phraseology of its censorship plan (the board has refused to make public all the regulations) there is no doubt that the amended version remains sweeping enough to deprive the American people of much information which it is their right to know.

Witnesses Fail To Appear for Secrecy Probe

A probe into alleged secret Government plans to withhold news of Government activities didn't develop yesterday. Because somebody apparently kept news of the investigation secret, the scheduled witnesses failed to show up.

The probe, originally planned by a House Expenditures Subcommittee headed by Representative George H. Bender (R., Ohio) was taken over by Chairman Clare E. Hoffman (R., Mich.) of the full committee.

Yesterday, after waiting half an hour for witnesses, Hoffman declared the hearing off.

Three witnesses, Nat Finney, Washington correspondent for the Minneapolis and Des Moines newspapers; N. P. Howard, editor of the Cleveland News, and Jim Lucas of Scripps-Howard, said they hadn't been told of yesterday's meeting.

Finney, who last week was given the Clapper Award for disclosing the alleged censorship rule, said he had been told to appear tomorrow.

After presenting the award to Finney at a White House correspondents' dinner Saturday, the President said:

"This is the first time I've been called upon to award an Oscar to someone who builds up a straw man to tear him apart. The citation mentions the Federal Government—the Federal Administration. I don't know what that means. I didn't know you could get an award for a story which comes from the fourth assistant to the fourth assistant to the fourth assistant Secretary of State."

He was apparently referring to Hamilton Robinson, security officer of the State Department, who acted as head of the inter-departmental Committee representing the State, War and Navy Departments which prepared a preliminary draft of the projected censorship plan.

A-2 X THE EVENING STAR, Washington, D. C.
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1947.

Danger of Abuse Seen In VA Plan to Keep Documents Secret

The Veterans Administration has imposed a restrictive classification system for official documents that could be used to hide those that "would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

The regulations are the first step in a plan to require heads of every Federal department and agency to mark documents that should not be disclosed to the public.

Definitions for four classifications—"top secret," "secret," "confidential" and "restricted"—are being drawn up by the Security Advisory Board of the State-War-Navy Co-ordinating Committee to provide minimum standards for each agency.

Draft Not Completed.

Stanley R. Goodrich, assistant to Hamilton Robinson, State Department officer who is head of the committee, said the final draft of the definitions has not been completed.

When it is, he said, it will be sent to President Truman. His approval would make the system mandatory throughout the Government. The committee began work on the draft last March in compliance with a presidential executive order, Mr. Goodrich said.

William J. Driver, a special assistant at the Veterans' Administration, said the classification system was adopted at VA three months ago. He said the definitions for the four security classes were "copied exactly" from the first draft of the Security Board recommendations.

System Not Yet Used.

Since July, VA has not used any of the classifications, Mr. Driver said.

However, the agency always has marked its voluminous files of veterans' records "confidential," he said, taking the stand that such personal information about veterans should not be opened to the public.

The new "confidential" classification forbids disclosure of information that, "although not endangering the national security, would be prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the Nation, any governmental activity, or an individual, or would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

"Top secret" material, Mr. Driver said, is that "which would cause exceptionally grave damage to the Nation." The agency puts these interpretations on the other two classes:

"Secret" information disclosed would "cause serious injury to the interests or prestige of the Nation."

"Restricted" information is that "which should not be published or communicated to any one except for official purposes."

Draft Was Ordered.

Mr. Driver stressed that the draft was ordered, and that "there was no thought of giving any official the chance to cover anything up or to keep it from the press."

A primary consideration of the draft was to give additional protection to critical documents of the Army, Navy and Atomic Energy Commission that must be transmitted to other agencies, he said.

Another reason, he added, was to furnish a "guide post to agencies that receive documents they otherwise might not know how to handle."

STAR, Washington, D. C.
OCTOBER 27, 1947.

Editors Hit Directive On Security Prepared By Advisory Board

By the Associated Press

CLEVELAND, Oct. 27.—Directors of the American Society of Newspaper Editors yesterday denounced an attempt to implement President Truman's loyalty order of last March with directives which the editors said would "place even the ordinary affairs of Federal civilian agencies beyond public scrutiny."

Concluding a two-day meeting, the ASNE board passed a resolution opposing security regulations prepared by the Security Advisory Board of the State, War and Navy Department Co-ordinating Committee.

These regulations, the resolution said, already are embodied in a directive for guidance of the Veterans' Administration and that directive "evidently is a pattern for directives to be issued to other Federal agencies."

Directive Is Cited.

The editors' resolution said the VA directive "classifies as confidential all information the unauthorized disclosure of which, although not endangering the national security, would be prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the Nation, any governmental activity or an individual, or would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

"The broad nature of this language could be used to deprive the public of information to which it is entitled. While the announced purpose of the President's loyalty order is to protect the Nation in the difficult international situation which now exists, the VA directive classes as confidential information which does not affect the national security."

Without questioning the purpose of the President's loyalty order, the board said it felt the committee implementing the order had gone "far beyond any reasonable exercise of its authority," and urged the President "to nullify the VA gag rule and to strike any such rule out of the regulations for other departments."

"Congress even in wartime refused to adopt a similar proposal," the resolution declared, and maintained that under the directive "any administrative officer could shield himself from public scrutiny or criticism by simply labeling the information as 'confidential.'"

"If the VA directive is made effective to all Federal agencies, no person in the Federal Government could give information to the press without fear of grave reprisals from his superiors," the resolution continued.

The board met in Cleveland for the first time in tribute to the society's president, N. R. Howard, editor of the Cleveland News, to discuss plans for the annual meeting of the ASNE in Washington, D. C., next April.

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The directors today elected to ASNE membership under the distinguished service to journalism clause in the society's constitution, Roscoe Drummond, Washington correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor; Arthur Krock, New York Times Washington correspondent, and Walter Lippman of the New York Herald Tribune.

Resolution Adopted.

Yesterday the directors adopted a resolution authorizing the society to co-operate with the State Department in the work of the American delegation to the General Conference on Freedom of Information to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, next year under United Nations sponsorship.

In addition to Mr. Howard, those attending the board meeting were B. M. McKelway, editor of The Washington Star; Dwight Young, editor of the Dayton (Ohio) Journal-Herald; Alexander F. Jones, assistant to the publisher of the Washington Post; Virginius Dabney, editor of the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch; Ralph Coghlan, editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch; Wright Bryan, managing editor of the Atlanta Journal; Hamilton Owens, editor of the Baltimore Sun; John S. Knight, publisher of the Knight newspapers; David Lawrence, editor of the United States News; Dwight Perrin, managing editor of the Philadelphia Bulletin; Oveta Culp Hobby, editor and publisher of the Houston Post, and Erwin D. Canham, editor of the Christian Science Monitor.

Look
April 13, 1948

AN EDITOR

"You Can't Print That!"

The Truman Administration is trying to re-establish wartime censorship

By RICHARD WILSON

Chief of Look's Washington Bureau

Government censorship of what people shall read and say was dropped instantly the war ended. It has returned in such a gradual and subtle way that even President Truman, whose policies encouraged it, does not admit it is here.

A Government system for keeping secret much valuable public information has been imposed and is being extended. "You can't print that," is being said more frequently.

Some officials, including David E. Lilienthal, atomic energy chairman, have balked. Others, such as Secretary of State George C. Marshall and Defense Secretary James V. Forrestal, are backing further restrictions.

A few newspaper correspondents and radio commentators have awakened to find the horse halfway out of the barn. But the great majority are blandly unaware, or uninterested in, the harm that has already been done.

The restrictions imposed are of two kinds. One is an ironclad system for classifying and restricting as top secret, secret or confidential any type of information held by a Government official. The man who decides what this information shall be is the cabinet member in charge of the department concerned, or his security officer. Information so classified cannot be given out by any employee upon penalty of discharge and criminal charges.

The other restriction is that which cabinet members seek to impose upon the press and radio by voluntary means. A press censorship of so-called scientific information is in the course of being established under pressure from Defense Secretary Forrestal.

Is this two-way system of censorship necessary? Forrestal and Marshall insist that vital military and diplomatic information will leak out of their departments and get into the hands of the Russians, or otherwise embarrass the American attempt to establish world peace.

* Do Politicians Hide Mistakes?

If this were the only reason, and if it were accepted that such a system would work in peacetime (which is highly doubtful), the objections which are rising might not be justified. But the workings of the official mind on censorship have been bleakly exposed. Behind the breast-beating against giving information to the Russians is the very human, if deplorable, desire of politicians to hide their own non-secret mistakes.

Here is the story. Shortly after war's end, the State Department established a secrecy system. Documents or other information were rubber-stamped top secret, secret, confidential and restricted. Elaborate regulations were drafted to describe each of these classifications. Much material truly secret was so rubber-stamped; and, of course, the stamp was placed,

with a great deal of forethought, on documents which later could be used by retiring public officials in writing their memoirs.

Soon the secrecy system was extended to so-called "sensitive" departments. These were departments where infiltration of Communists could be most serious. Since one Government department has to deal with another it soon developed that all departments, even Agriculture and Commerce, were equally "sensitive." It does no good to plug one hole in a sieve.

* Truman Orders Secrecy Wall

President Truman issued a policy directive which would permit the building of the secrecy wall around all Government departments. The State Department lost no time drafting the secrecy code. And then came the payoff.

The code provided for holding secret any "information, the unauthorized disclosure of which, although not endangering the national security, would be prejudicial to the interests or prestige of the nation, any governmental activity, or an individual; or would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty."

In other words, all Government employees were ordered to clam up on anything—misbehavior, graft, blunders—which might get the boss into trouble. In more elegant language, it sounded like orders to the lower ranks from Hague, Kelly or Pendergast.

It all leaked out before the code could go into effect—except in one Government agency, the Veterans Administration. Protests from editors' organizations forced the Truman Administration to drop the ban against embarrassing information and put the plan on the shelf. It will be dusted off when things quiet down. President Truman, whose own order made the code possible, claimed he never heard of it.

The need to protect American defense secrets from Soviet espionage, or spying by any country, is well-recognized. All officials have a moral and legal responsibility to do so. But the wartime experience of censorship and restricted information was so heady that every secrecy plan so far put forward goes beyond actual needs.

Otherwise sane military men, when given the power to censor, go berserk. They operate on the theory that all must be hidden; the less the public knows the better. Anything that reflects on the military branches, censorable or not, is usually considered objectionable.

The Office of Censorship during the war was a civilian agency. It soon found one of its major responsibilities was to pressure the military branches to release information which in no way hindered the war effort. Every censorship official can cite a half-dozen instances

of military officers trying to keep information to which the public was entitled.

After months of hesitation, Atomic Energy Chairman Lilienthal has decided to take the big brass and tell as much as he can about the atomic program. No man in Government is under a more severe legal responsibility to keep the real secrets than Lilienthal, and he has done so after careful consideration that he should.

"There is a growing tendency in some quarters to act as if atomic energy is none of the American public's business. In my opinion, this is plain nonsense and dangerous to cherished institutions and for that reason dangerous to genuine national security."

Lilienthal has also said, "You must watch your public servants, to keep us, whether in the executive branch, in the judiciary, or in Congress. And to do so, your views and judgments must be based on some knowledge of the background."

* Real Secrets Can Be Kept

The Atomic Energy Commission is working out a system to tell the maximum amount of information without giving away secrets. A secret has escaped it yet.

Recently, an aviation magazine printed a story on a supersonic aircraft spy plane. About the same time, a Colorado newspaper printed a story on a "hole in the ground" built in New Mexico. Officially, both thought both accounts gave the wrong impression, but an insight into our secret military activities.

Defense Secretary Forrestal is negotiating for a voluntary arrangement with the press, radio and motion pictures for the release in Washington of all such stories in the future. Former officials of the popular war-time Office of Censorship were brought to Washington to help work out the plan.

They went about their work with some fears that hidebound military thinking might prevail to a greater extent than during the war. For, admitting the need to keep American secrets closely, it is at this point that the Truman Administration has flourished its censorship.

Even during the war the big brass did not run the Office of Censorship. The military mind now prevails in so many civilian offices that a workable and effective system for keeping America's secrets still keeping America informed, is essential.

The lesson the wartime censorship taught was a simple one. Real secrets are best guarded at the source. A Government official must know a secret when he sees it, and how to keep it. The enemy will dig out held secrets, whatever the press or

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Light And Darkness

In our naivete we have been under the impression that the function of the public information office of any Government agency is exactly what is implied in the title. Judging from recent twists, however, precisely the opposite is becoming the rule. The State Department Security Handbook has put employes on tenterhooks lest they be suspected of consorting with newspapermen, who seem to be regarded as on a par with enemy secret agents. And now we learn that the Department of Justice has similar ideas. In his testimony on the 1948 appropriation bill, Mr. S. A. Andretta, administrative assistant to the Attorney General, described the duties of the public information staff. "I would say," he informed Congressmen, "that their function, rather than publicity, is to prevent information from leaking out of the department."

Wash. Post 6/13/47

This, we submit, is a formula which turns the information staffs into security police. Strangely enough, the author of this doctrine, at least in the State Department's case, is a man under jail sentence for concealing his Communist affiliation—Carl Aldo Marzani. The strangest thing about this perverse doctrine is that no one in Government has risen to challenge it. It would be odd, indeed, for an agency to espouse the motto of "Let there be darkness," but that is precisely what unwarranted secrecy promotes.

It seems to us that conscientious public officials ought to be aware of the danger of a formalized, take-it-or-leave-it relationship with the press and hence with the public. Inevitably, that is what would be encouraged by allowing contacts to degenerate into mere handouts that discourage objective inquiry. That is the way to perfunctory, ill-informed reporting that makes for a misguided public at a time when intelligent public opinion is of extreme importance. To whom, pray tell, does information about the Government belong if not to the people? How is the public to be informed about the Department of Justice or any other agency unless reporters are free to ask questions and officials are free to provide background without fear of recrimination? Are we to be fed only a diet of rumor?

Obyious, what brought on this flurry of

precautions was the problem of leaks to columnists. The answer to this problem, in our opinion, is self-discipline, and top-level officials should turn the screws on themselves first. The solution certainly is not to turn Government employes into a society of quivering clams. The infection that seems to be attacking certain distrustful minds in the invoking of this absurd iron curtain ought to be halted before it becomes an epidemic.