

Panel Feels Press Can Beat Curbs

Special to The New York Times
 NEW HAVEN, April 21.—"If Watergate proves nothing else, it proves what the press is all about," Peter Bridge, a former Newark News reporter who was jailed last fall for refusing to divulge his sources to a grand jury, said this week.

He made the comment as a member of a panel that met at Yale University to assess the impact of recent challenges to the press.

The panel members agreed that although the print and electronic media were faced with intensified government harassment, the press could and would manage to do its job.

Two panelists—United States Senator Alan Cranston, Democrat of California, and John B.

Oakes, editorial page editor of The New York Times—warned against a bill recently proposed by the Administration that would allow the Chief Executive to divulge much information.

The Senator said the bill, which is included in the Administration's proposed revision of the United States Criminal Code, "would bring down an executive Iron Curtain on all U. S. Government activities that touch on, among other things, national defense and foreign affairs. It would sanction the absolute classification of Government documents by some 20,000 faceless bureaucrats."

Mr. Oakes said the bill would make Britain's Official Secrets Act "look like child's play."

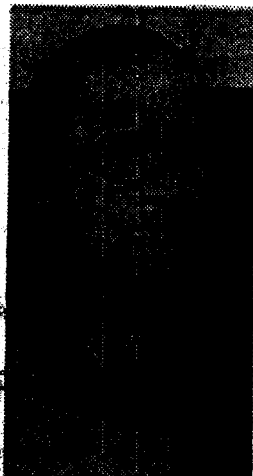
Burke Marshall, a Yale law professor, defended the concept of a shield law, noting that re-

porters had functioned without any formally recognized privilege in the past and should have such protection.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark said: "We need someone to tell us the facts. We need to dig. We can't be afraid of the facts."

Newbold Noyes Jr., editor of The Washington Star-News, agreed that the media were witnessing an intensified "attack" by the Administration, but said that in publicizing the threat to freedom, "we risk very much, boring the public to death with protestations about how we are being intimidated."

The panel moderator, Ralph Brown Jr., a Yale law professor, quickly responded: "Besides, if a number of editors and publishers go to jail, it might hasten a reform of the penal system."



Associated Press
 Peter Bridge before he started to serve prison term last October.