

Public Eyes The Press As 'Root Of Major Evil'

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ATLANTA, Ga. (AP) — The Executive Editor of the Washington Post said Tuesday that despite the uncovering of Watergate, the public is focusing as rarely before on the press as a root of major evil.

"Criticism of the press does not threaten the press or the Republic until and unless this criticism is part of a general offensive against the press," said Benjamin C. Bradlee.

"It is my thesis that the press today is the target of exactly such an offensive, whose battle plan is loosely drawn by the executive branch of the government, and whose battles are being fought by the judiciary, federal and local."

Bradlee told about 100 persons attending the Dirks Newspaper Financial Forum that the freedom of the press is threatened now as it has not been before.

He said March of last year, the Nixon administration introduced a bill in Congress which, if enacted, "will quite simply emasculate freedom of the press, and end for all time the noble art of investigative reporting."

He said the bill, the "Criminal Code Reform Act of 1973," makes it a crime, punishable by jail terms from three to seven years or by fines ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000, or both,

for anyone to communicate classified information to anyone not authorized by the government to receive it.

The proposed legislation, he said, would make it a crime to reveal any classified information, however wisely or unwisely classified.

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Post President Wants Star-News To Continue

ATLANTA, Ga. (AP) — The president of the Washington Post said Tuesday of her rival newspaper, the Star-News, which has tentatively agreed to sell substantial minority interests to a Texas banker, "We admire them, we respect them, we want them to continue."

Mrs. Katharine Graham, attending the Dirks Newspaper Forum, was questioned by a member of the audience about the proposed sale of stock in the Evening Star-News and its parent company.

"I am shocked at (any) idea of the Star-News going out of business," Mrs. Graham said. "It's very important that every city have two voices. I believe the Star-News will survive."

lication of 150 million pages of information in government offices about a war the United States fought 30 years ago, and 75 million pages still classified, about the Korean War.

"In short, it would prevent publication of any information which the government did not want published," said Bradlee. "This is the goal and practice of dictatorships, not democracies."

In the last 30 months, he said, the Washington Post has been involved "in the three great first amendment fights of our times."

He named these as the publication of the Pentagon papers, the Pulitzer prize-winning publication of the Watergate affair and its endless sequel and the campaign by the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

Throughout the hectic legal battles involved in the publishing of the Pentagon papers, Bradlee said a central question emerged: "Who the hell are newspaper editors to decide whether information represents a threat to national security?"

The two-day forum is an annual event for security analysts and managers from major financial institutions, particularly those with an interest in newspapers.