

Sen. McIntyre to Seek Breakup Of Chain-Owned News Media

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Challenging Vice President Agnew to support him, Sen. Thomas J. McIntyre proposed legislation yesterday that would break up dozens of newspaper-broadcasting combinations across the country.

The New Hampshire Democrat also called for a ban on any more acquisitions of daily papers by the nation's big newspaper chains—such as the Chicago Tribune Co., Newhouse, Knight, Scripps-Howard and Hearst.

"Slowly, almost imperceptibly, our mass communications media are falling into fewer hands," McIntyre warned.

"Unless we face up to the dangers such concentration entails, we may soon lose the diverse and antagonistic voices on which the welfare of our nation depends."

The Vice President has complained about concentrated ownership of the news media, but in a manner, McIntyre said, that shows "seeming ignorance of the real dangers such media concentration could present."

Agnew has spoken out twice in criticism of television net-

works and newspapers, most recently in Montgomery, Ala., where he declared that "the American people should be made aware of the trend toward the monopolization of the great public information vehicles and the concentration of more and more power over public opinion in fewer and fewer hands."

Agnew made the remark in a speech largely critical of the multiple interests of The Washington Post and the news judgment of The New York Times.

McIntyre said the legislation he will introduce when Congress reconvenes next week would address itself to the problems he accused Agnew of glossing over.

The most far-reaching proposal would prohibit daily newspapers and their proprietors from owning or controlling any radio or TV station in the same metropolitan area. Newspaper-broadcasting combinations—such as The Washington Post and WTOP-TV and The Evening Star and WMAL-TV—would have three years to sell off one or the other of their properties.

The edict would not apply

to CATV (cable television) stations which many newspapers are acquiring.

McIntyre's bill would also prohibit newspaper chains with five or more dailies from buying any more.

According to an analysis by the Federal Communications Commission in late 1968, at least 85 television stations, most of them lucrative VHF channels, are owned or controlled by local newspaper interests. Newspapers also control more than 215 radio sta-

tions in their own communities. Relying on somewhat older statistics, McIntyre said there were 76 communities where the one newspaper and the one radio station are under common control and 23 more that "put up with jointownership of their only television station and only newspaper."

He said that approximately half of the nation's 1,767 daily newspapers—including 19 of the 25 largest—are owned by chains. During the past decade, McIntyre declared, "an average of 40 single-newspaper ownerships have been bought out by chains each and every year."

"At the present rate of expansion," he said in an 11-page statement, "all of the daily newspapers in the country will be owned by chains in less than 20 years."

McIntyre's bill is expected to arouse opposition and appears to stand little chance of passage. But the senator expects hearings before the Sen-

ate Antitrust subcommittee and intends to stress the issues involved.

Beyond that, the proposals support opponents, including McIntyre, of the so-called Newspaper Preservation Act that is scheduled for Senate debate next week.

That act would override existing antitrust laws and permit 44 dailies in 22 cities to continue operating under joint agreements to fix prices, pool profits and divide markets. The Nixon administration—speaking through the Commerce Department—supports the bill.

Calling for defeat of the Newspaper Preservation Act, McIntyre maintained that it would open the door to other special favors for the media, fail to preserve editorial independence, and discourage other potential competitors from entering the markets involved.

The senator said he would propose an amendment that will guarantee Senate debate on "the issue of media concentration."

Perhaps the biggest impact of the McIntyre restriction on newspaper ownership of broadcasting would be felt by the Newhouse chain, which has both newspapers and television stations in Portland, St. Louis, Birmingham and Syracuse. The Chicago Tribune Co., which owns the New York Daily News and television stations in both New York and Chicago, would also be affected.