

# Byron Price Probes Kellems Letter Leak

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## Censor Volunteers To Help Senate Group's Inquiry

By Mary Spargo

Censorship Director Byron Price yesterday volunteered to help a Senate committee discover what Government agency violated its trust by permitting the love letters of a Connecticut woman war manufacturer to a German count to become public property.

Price revealed that the correspondence of Count Frederick Karl von Zedlitz, Argentine representative of the German steel trust, has been under investigation since 1942. He did not mention by name Miss Mvien Kellems, 47-year-old Westport manufacturer, who recently protested disclosure of excerpts from her letters to the count, whom she addressed in terms of endearment.

### Brings Up New Angle

At the same time the censorship director brought up a new angle in the case.

He said that his office has been watching "the attempt of a German called Zedlitz, in Argentina, to maintain a line of communication among Berlin, Buenos Aires and the United States."

In this connection Price pointed out that the Trading With the Enemy Act of 1917 prohibits "communication with the enemy except by specific authority of the President."

Violation of this part of the statute is punishable by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or a jail sentence not to exceed 10 years.

Shortly after the United States entered the war, the Treasury Department directed that under this statute any persons wanting to communicate with an enemy through the mails must obtain a license from the Office of Censorship.

It could not be learned last night whether Miss Kellems applied for or obtained such a license to send the dozen or so letters to Von Zedlitz from which quotations were made. Apparently Von Zed-

litz never requested such a license from the United States.

Study of the section of the act III c, dealing with communications by mail, indicates that there may be room for differences in legal interpretation of the statute.

### Question Unsettled

The issue, as far as could be learned, has not been settled in the courts as to whether the section in question prohibits passage of letters to the enemy without a license through regular censored mail channels or whether it only bans passing of letters and other documents through channels not subject to censorship.

Price was as outspoken yesterday in condemning the leakage of the letters as Senator Clyde M. Reed (R., Kans.), who has been urging an investigation by the Senate Committee on Postoffices and Post Roads. Reed is ranking minority member of the committee.

In the presence of reporters Price told Reed that disclosure of Miss Kellems' mail was "in violation of pledges repeatedly made to me by Government agencies that such mail would not be allowed to fall into anybody else's hands.

### "Who Was Faithless"

"I am more anxious than any Senate committee," Price declared, "to find out who was faithless in this trust."

The censorship director said he had been making an inquiry into where the leak was ever since the first excerpt was made public. So far, he admitted later, he has come to no conclusion.

There seems little doubt that the Postoffice committee will pursue the matter, although a formal agreement cannot be reached until Chairman Kenneth McKellar (D., Tenn.) returns from the Easter recess.