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# Critics back up 'JFK' reviewer

By Kevin Phinney

The National Society of Film Critics is panning the Washington magazine editor whose refusal to run a favorable review of "JFK" prompted the film critic to resign.

In a statement Friday, the organization said it "deplores the decision by Washingtonian editor John A. Limpert to withdraw from its February issue the favorable re-

view of 'JFK' by critic Pat Dowell."

Three weeks ago, Limpert cut Dowell's brief critique of the film, explaining in a letter to her that "I didn't want the magazine associated with a review that calls 'JFK' 'a brilliantly crafted indictment.'"

The critic quit when Limpert declined a second opportunity to run her review.

See **CRITICS** on page 47

The Hollywood Reporter

The Hollywood Reporter

## Critics

Continued from page 3—

Dowell told The Hollywood Reporter that the society's condemnation of Limpert's decision was "a very generous demonstration on my behalf. I have been very heartened by the outpouring of support, even though I believe the society is upholding a principle of free speech that is much larger than this one specific instance."

Peter Rainer, chairman of the society, said the group responded because "as a group, I think it's important that the National Society of Film Critics take a stand when a review is pulled from a publication because the editor disagrees over the political content of the movie. That constitutes a form of censorship. . . . The whole point of having a critic is to be able to have a right to one's own opinion unencumbered by the tastes and whims of an editor."

Dowell also expressed surprise at the responses to her decision. "I got a phone call last Monday from Kevin Costner — a personal call, really. He said he'd read about my

predicament, and he appreciated what I had done in standing up for my review of the film."

Rob Friedman, Warner Bros. president of worldwide advertising and publicity, said he too thought the outpouring of sentiment and the building of momentum to release files relating to the assassination of President Kennedy have helped stem the tide of negative press about "JFK."

"I think the society's response is totally appropriate," Friedman said, describing the Washingtonian's action as "censorship of the most obvious kind."

Friedman believes the "establishment press has held a partisan attitude" toward "JFK" since the movie's release Dec. 20.

"Because the movement to free the files has occurred, the public's need to know has sort of superceded the press going after the movie's content, and now they're calling for the release of the files, too," Friedman said. "Here (at Warner Bros.) we sort of look around and say, 'Where were they four weeks ago, when they were calling us crackpots?'" □