

# Newsmen at House Hearing Accuse U.S. of Attempting Censorship

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WASHINGTON, June 25—

Representatives of the nation's news media accused the Government today of attempted censorship in blocking publication of the Pentagon study of the Vietnam war.

Except in time of declared war, the news executives told Congress, the Government has no right to exercise "prior restraint" to prevent publication of information in the public interest.

The panel of newsmen appeared before a House Government Operations subcommittee to defend The New York Times, The Washington Post and other newspapers that have published parts of the Pentagon study and to criticize what was termed the Government's excessive secrecy.

J. Edward Murray, president-

elect of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, testified that the editors who decided to publish the secret data "are just as loyal, just as patriotic, as any man in this room or in the White House."

## Defends Record of Press

Declaring he felt that newspapers have been "under unjust assault" in recent weeks, Mr. Murray said that he was appearing before the House subcommittee "to defend the rights of the newspaper editor, which, not at all incidentally, are the rights of every American citizen."

He said he felt that the record of the nation's newspapers in reporting the war in Vietnam "is better than that of the executive branch" of the Government.

He noted that the newspaper editors' society as early as

1967, had begun to criticize the Government for "excessive secrecy." He said that the society's Freedom of Information Committee had reported in 1967 that "President Johnson continues to hurt his image and his credibility by consistently trying to make the news sound or seem better than it is."

Mr. Murray said he hoped that one by-product of publication of the secret study "will be to restore public confidence in the traditional axiom that you can believe what you read in your newspapers."

## Guild Head Testifies

Until recently, Mr. Murray was managing editor of The Arizona Republic. He jokingly told the subcommittee that the place of his next job, was "classified for the moment." Charles A. Perlik Jr., president of the American News-

paper Guild, testified that he felt that the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press "faces its most serious challenge in memory, if not, indeed, in our history as a nation."

He said that the guild, representing 35,000 news and commercial employees, and many of its principal local unions unanimously supported publication of the Pentagon study.

He said that "once the public's right to know is abridged by government censorship of the press," the credibility of both the press and the government are destroyed.

Richard Kleeman, Washington correspondent for The Minneapolis Tribune and chairman of the Freedom of Information Committee for Sigma Delta Chi, a journalism society, suggested that further threats

to freedom of the press could be in the offing.

"How soon will the next one occur, and the next, and the next?" he asked.

John R. Callahan, vice president of McGraw-Hill Publications Company, representing the American Business Press, Inc., suggested the need for more periodic or continuing review of classified material by an independent agency or group, not the agency that did the original classifying.

Others criticizing the Government's attempt to block publication of the study were W. Bradford Wiley, president of John Wiley and Sons, Inc., representing the Association of American Publishers; and J. W. Roberts, Washington bureau chief of Time-Life Broadcasting, chairman of the Freedom of Information Committee of Radio-Television News Directors.





**AT HEARING ON CENSORSHIP:** Testifying on freedom of information before House subcommittee, from left: Richard P. Kleeman of The Minneapolis Tribune; Charles A. Perlik Jr., American Newspaper Guild president; J. W. Roberts, Washington bureau chief of Time-Life broadcast-

United Press International  
ing; John R. Callahan, McGraw-Hill Publications Co. vice president; J. Edward Murray, vice president of American Society of Newspaper Editors, and W. Bradford Wiley, chairman of board of Association of American Publishers. They hit effort to block publication of Pentagon papers.