

NIXON DISCLOSURE ON CENSOR URGED

President Is Asked to Give
Name of Emergency Aide

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 8 —

President Nixon was asked today to disclose the name of the nation's chief censor, a private citizen now on standby duty who would assume office in a national emergency.

The censor's name has been a secret part of the Government's contingency plan for keeping military secrets out of the press in wartime.

The request was made in a letter to the President from Samuel J. Archibald, Washington representative of the University of Missouri's Freedom of Information Center.* Mr. Archibald was formerly staff director of the House Subcommittee on Freedom of Information.

Mr. Archibald asked the President to "lift the security restrictions and disclose the identity of the man who is designed as the stand-by director of the Office of Censorship."

The names of 26 "executive reservists" who would administer the program have been made public. These persons would include Government officials and academicians who would be mobilized into managerial positions.

"If an emergency justifies the imposition of Government censorship in a democratic society" Mr. Archibald wrote, "the members of that society have a right to know the identity of the censors."

'Certain' of Identity

Mr. Archibald said he had learned unofficially that the chief censor is a former newsman who is now a lobbyist for a large corporation. He said the lobbyist was "prompting the interests of a single company which started out in the information business and has since branched into musical instruments, toy making, book publishing, sports promotion and many other activities."

In an interview, Mr. Archibald said he was "absolutely certain" of the censor's identity. But he declined to name the censor because he said the Administration should make the disclosure and because the disclosure of secret information might be a violation of the espionage laws.

An official of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, which is responsible for maintaining the stand-by censorship program, was unable to explain the reasons for keeping the censor's identity secret.

"That is classified because there was an executive decision that it should be," he said. "There is a long classified history of why it should be classified."

Mr. Archibald called the secrecy "wall-to-wall bureaucratic stupidity." He said he had written earlier to George A. Lincoln, director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, who is a member of the National Security Council, asking for the censor's name.

Mr. Archibald also said he had asked Herbert G. Klein, the President's director of communications, about the secrecy and that Mr. Klein had spoken to the President about it. But, Mr. Archibald said, nothing happened, so he wrote to the President directly.

Decision by President

The issue brought to light an extensive but little-known plan for press censorship that includes not telling the American people that they are under nuclear attack unless the Government approves.

The plan is an outgrowth of censorship set up in World War II and was last revised in 1963. It would go into operation when the President decreed a national emergency, which he may do on his own authority, without Congressional approval.

Under the plan, the executive reservists would report for duty, much like military reservists, to run the censorship operation. They include news executives, businessmen, Government officials and academicians.

They would report to a secret headquarters outside Washington. It is reportedly near Westminster, Md., because three of the members are at Western Maryland College there.

The President's decree would invoke the "stand-by voluntary censorship code" that has been

drawn up in consultation with the news media, according to the Office of Emergency Preparedness. President Kennedy considered employing the code in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, as did President Johnson in the Dominican crisis in 1965.

In Vietnam, newsmen have submitted to self-censorship under written guidelines put out by the United States headquarters in Saigon. They have been asked to delete information of tactical military value to the enemy.

Although the Vietnam program is voluntary, there have been instances of correspondents' credentials being revoked when the men were charged with violating the guidelines.

Under the stand-by code, the news media would be asked not to publish certain information of possible value to an enemy unless it was cleared by the censor.

*Article on the Center,
Saturday Review 13 Mar 71,
filed Preparation.