

Mollenhoff: See Air Ad, NYTimes 1 Jun 70,
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CAPITAL NEWSMEN SAY SECRECY RISES

Most in Survey Think Flow
of Information Has Slowed

WASHINGTON, April 18 (AP)—Nineteen of 28 Washington correspondents surveyed by a committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors report that secrecy in government has increased.

Eight told the society's Freedom of Information Committee that secrecy had remained about the same since they started covering Washington, and one—Peter Lisagor, bureau chief of The Chicago Daily News—said "more information is available today."

The survey was prepared for the 1972 convention of the society, opening tomorrow.

Among the scheduled speakers is Vice President Agnew, a target of criticism by some of the correspondents canvassed. Secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally and several Democratic Presidential aspirants also will speak.

"All 28 correspondents deplored in varying degree the amount of secrecy in government," Robert M. White 2d, chairman of the editors' committee said in announcing the results of the survey. Mr. White is editor and publisher of The Mexico (Mo.) Ledger.

Mr. White said the replies amounted to "an important, penetrating and often a devastating critique of what's happening in our governments."

The 'Use' of Agnew

Philip Potter, bureau chief of The Baltimore Sun, called President Nixon a master a publicizing the virtues and concealing the faults of his Administration. Mr. Potter deplored what he called "abandonment of the news conference."

Mr. Potter went on: "The President's use of Spiro T. Agnew to traduce the press and other news media bothers me a damn sight more than any penchant for secrecy Mr. Nixon may have."

"One would be a fool to believe that Mr. Agnew is acting on his own," Mr. Potter said.

Clark R. Mollenhoff of The Des Moines Register and Tribune, who served in the White House for a time as deputy counsel to President Nixon, said secrecy in government had increased substantially during his 20 years in Washington. He added:

"The Nixon Administration, because of the nature of some of the high officials and their lack of political experience prior to assuming high government posts, may be as bad as the Johnson Administration during which secrecy was at an all-time high."

'Just Bureaucracy'

To Newbold Noyes, editor of The Washington Evening Star, the situation is "just bureaucracy doing what comes naturally." There is more secrecy because there is more bureaucracy, he said.

"The Nixon crowd is perhaps a little more uptight about keeping its own counsel than some previous Administrations," Mr. Noyes said. "Certainly these guys are clumsier, less sophisticated, about their efforts to keep the lid on than the Kennedy people were, for instance."

Hugh Sidey of Time-Life News Service said secrecy had thickened steadily from the Eisenhower Administration through Mr. Nixon's. "It is my judgment that the Nixon Administration keeps more important deliberations and decisions from the American public than any other previous Administrations," Mr. Sidey said.

The Associated Press's Washington bureau chief, Marvin L. Arrowsmith, said he believes secrecy in government has increased considerably, partly because of "a marked uptrend in the classification of government documents, often without justification."

Hostility Discerned

Peter Lisagor, while saying that more information was available today than when he came to Washington in 1950, added that the information was less consequential and that the Administration's news managers were "defensive, selective, fearful, disdainful."

"The media all too often are viewed with suspicion and hostility, not as vehicles for disseminating information but as adversaries waiting to ambush them," he said. "The cast of mind at the White House is

distinctly one of 'We'll tell you what's going on when we damn well please.'"

"Secrecy in government has indeed increased," in his 18 years in Washington, said Charles W. Bailey, bureau chief of The Minneapolis Tribune. He attributed this partly to "the accretion of decision-making power in the White House."

"This has brought more policymaking, and thus more information, within the classic 'executive privilege' area—and so has removed more of it from the places where . . . a reporter can pry it loose," Mr. Bailey said.