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McGovern Blasts Nixon About Press

Washington

Senator George S. McGovern (Dem-S.D.), said yesterday the Nixon administration has amassed a "simply stunning" record of actions against critical news organizations in the past year.

McGovern, the 1972 Democratic presidential candidate, said the administration had sought to cut off the flow of news by denying reporters access to information and by threatening jail terms for those who would not serve as government informants.

When those tactics failed and news agencies published criticism of the government, the administration attempted punishment, the senator said.

McGovern made the remarks in a speech at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass. The text was made public here.

"The record of the last year alone" in administration attempts to punish news organizations "is simply stunning for its ingenuity and sweep as well as its utter disregard for the spirit of the First Amendment," McGovern said.

He listed these examples:

- Presidential aide Patrick Buchanan's warning last May of "antitrust-type action" against television for what he called biased reporting in Vietnam.

- Another White House aide's charge that the New York Times was "a conduit of enemy propaganda to the American people" with its coverage of the war.

- "A constant administration barrage" against the Washington Post, ranging from exclusion of one reporter from White House social functions to "A challenge of its Florida television station license by a Republican campaign official."

- An "ideological coup" against public affairs programs on the Public Broadcasting System, the publicly financed educational television network.

- White House aide Clay Whitehead's suggestion that local television stations be threatened with loss of license if they carry imbalanced network news broadcasts.

- The arrest a few weeks ago of Leslie Whitten, an associate of columnist Jack Anderson, on charges of receiving documents stolen from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the government's decision to drop charges after a grand jury refused to hand down an indictment.

"This dreary and depressing list could go on and on," McGovern said. "And unless such repression is stopped, the outcome may be newspapers that are blank and airwaves silent on the great issues."

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