

# Nixon Attitude 'Most Anti-Press' -- Cranston

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif), today described the Nixon administration as the "most anti-press" in history and warned the Watergate scandal will not change it.

Cranston, a former reporter for the International News Service, said:

"The President and Vice President are seemingly offering a cease-fire in administration attacks on the press and presidential press secretary Ron Ziegler has even apologized to the Washington Post.

"But this has been probably the most anti-press administration in history and it isn't logical to expect that its attitude toward the press will change overnight and under duress" of watergate.

"It's especially unlikely when the administration continues to see so much embarrassing inside infor-

mation being exposed in the press almost daily," Cranston told the American Society of Newspaper Editors convention.

"It is far more reasonable to expect that once the heat lets up the administration will be even more aggressive in trying to plug up leaks in the executive department by making it even more difficult — and more perilous — for government employes to talk to the press in confidence."

Cranston said the success of the press in breaking open the Watergate case "makes more urgent than ever" that Congress enact strong federal legislation to protect confidential news sources.

"The press must be free to protect its sources so it can continue to expose corruption and lawlessness in and out of government, in high places and low," he said.

Cranston has sponsored a bill that would bar reporters subpoenaed at federal, state, or local levels from being forced to testify about stories they have written or to turn over their notes and other work products. The protection would apply in both civil and criminal proceedings and whether or not the information or its sources was confidential.

"The dramatic cracking of the Watergate case is a cogent argument for confirming the newsman's historical privilege of protecting his sources," he said. "If inside sources had not been willing to talk with members of the news media, the public would not have been told the truth about what was going on."

The ASNE convention, which ends today, devoted most of its sessions to the press' role in uncovering the Watergate scandal. Clare Booth Luce, widow of Time-Life Publisher Henry R. Luce, commented in a speech yesterday that the scandal "may have destroyed the efficacy of the presidency."

Ben Bagdikian, newspaper critic and author, said he was afraid the press might "fall into a fever of self-congratulation" after the Watergate.