

30 ACCUED IN SUIT OF OPENING MAILS

Current and Ex-Officials
Blamed by Professor

PROVIDENCE, R.I., July 22(AP) — Thirty present and former officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and other Government agencies were accused in a class action suit today of illegally opening the mail of Americans.

The suit, filed by the American Civil Liberties Union in Federal District Court here, alleges that officials of the C.I.A., the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Post Office opened the first-class mail of

the plaintiff, Rodney Driver, and other American Americans.

Mr. Driver, a University of Rhode Island mathematics professor, said three letters he had sent to mathematicians in the Soviet Union were opened and copied. He said the letters contained personal and mathematical information.

At a news conference, Mr. Driver said he believed the C.I.A. opened his mail because he obtained copies of the letters from the agency when he requested them under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Rockefeller commission, which investigated C.I.A. activities, reported in June that the agency opened mail to or sent by American citizens. The mail project began in New York in 1952, the commission said, involving mail to and from the Soviet Union.

The program ended in 1973 and the commission reported

that during the last full year of the program the intelligence agency handled 4,350,000 items, examined the outside of 2.3 million, photographed the outside of 33,000 and opened 8,700.

The suit asks the court to order compensatory damages of \$20,000 for each letter opened and read by the C.I.A. and punitive damages of \$100,000 for each person whose mail it opened.

Among those named in the suit are: Richard Helms and James R. Schlesinger, former directors of Central Intelligence; L. Patrick Gray 3d, former acting F.B.I. director; former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and Lawrence F. O'Brien and Winton M. Blount, former Postmasters General.

Also named were William E. Colby, the director of Central Intelligence, and Clarence M. Kelley, the F.B.I. director,

whom the A.C.L.U. said had been named in the suit because they were the officials now responsible for maintaining the information obtained from the alleged illegal actions.

Spokesmen for the A.C.L.U. said they were unaware of the number of persons covered by the class action suit but estimated the number of Americans whose mail was opened to be in the tens of thousands.