

5/31/72
W. Pass

'FBI Friends' on Journalism

By William Claiborne

The Friends of the FBI Inc. which recently promised to "stand up for you against the powerful forces of biased journalism," sat down at the Mayflower Hotel long enough yesterday to hear three hours of unmistakably unfriendly comment on the print and electronics media.

The Friends, 150 strong yesterday, but claiming silent support in greater numbers, heard Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) complain that too often "banalities and trivialities are allowed to overwhelm the simple art of good writing," and that sensationalism had sur-

planted discretion in U.S. journalism.

They heard Fulton Lewis Jr., a Mutual Broadcasting Co. commentator and former House Un-American Activities Committee staffer, defend "wise invasions of privacy" by the government, and opine, "I wonder sometimes if the public doesn't know too much, if it isn't being told too much."

The Friends heard syndicated columnist John Cham-

berlain condemn The New York Times and The Washington Post, each for being "a fence for stolen goods" in choosing to publish the classified Pentagon Papers. He asserted that "public morality of our journalism has changed for the worst."

The Friends also listened to allegations by NBC newsmen Robert Goralski and Detroit News reporter Jerry Horst that the government is guilty of overclassifying documents for self-serving reasons. Their charges met with less applause.

The occasion for the critique of American journalism was the opening session

See FBI, B6, Col. 3

Nicholas von Hoffman is on vacation. His Poster column will resume on his return.

SCENE

Media

'FBI Friends' on Journalism

FBI, From BI

of a three-day conference on law enforcement and the media, sponsored by a freshly-reorganized Friends of the FBI Inc., a Washington-based group whose goal is to develop grass roots support for the bureau and counter adverse criticism from "the left."

The original Friends of the FBI was hastily dismantled last fall in the wake of Internal Revenue Service and U.S. Postal Service investigations into possible violation of tax and postal laws.

Earlier this month, it was disclosed that of the \$380,000 in contributions collected by the original Friends, at least \$236,000 was paid out in fees and expenses to the founding partners, with no public accounting to the contributors.

Hollywood actor Efrem Zimbalist Jr., who portrays Inspector Erskine on the television series, "The FBI," testily withdrew as honor-

ary chairman, claiming he was "used" by the partners.

The new president of the revamped Friends of the FBI Inc. is J. A. (Jay) Parker, 36, one of the few blacks active in Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) and other conservative causes.

Parker said yesterday that Friends is still on its feet and next month will issue a report on an \$80,000 study of the FBI. The Friends study, conducted by the Chicago-based Americans for Effective Law Enforcement, will be published as a book entitled "Our FBI: The True Story," Parker said.

The keynote speaker at yesterday's conference was Senate majority whip Byrd, who said that the detection and solving of crime "would often be simpler if the myriad of details were not emblazoned on every front page and blared forth from every microphone."

"Men and women have the privilege to write and to talk on public affairs and . . . have a tremendous re-

sponsibility to avoid abusing that privilege," Byrd said.

He termed as "shocking" the national press handling of the story of Arthur Bremer, who is accused of attempted murder in the shooting of Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace.

"I cannot, for a moment, understand why it is necessary, in the name of 'human interest' (to violate) sanctity of privacy . . ." Byrd declared. He accused the press of "plain bad taste" in investigating Bremer's background.

Byrd also complained of what he called "an increasing tendency toward shoddy technical production" of newspapers and news programs.

Citing "careless typos" and "lackadaisical editing," Byrd said, "There has gone from (journalism) a great deal of the pride and a great deal of the loyalty that once were characteristic of the practitioners of the scribes' art."

Byrd also complained of

a lack of objectivity in reporting law enforcement stories, particularly in cases where demonstrators clash with the police.

"One day, we may return to an America where tolerance—not overtolerance—is a virtue," Byrd said. "Where a different point of view is to be sought and respected and is not the object of derision and contempt."

Today's conference session on "Surveillance and the Media" will include ABC news producer Steven Fleischman; Richard McCutcheon, of New York's WNET-TV, and Frank Carrington, of Americans for Effective Law Enforcement.