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Daniel Schorr's Leaked Report

DANIEL SCHORR is a television newsman whom a great many admire for his tenacity and unflinching eye for the heart of any issue.

Equally, he is in the bad books of many in government who would rather not see their usually overclassified secrets pried into and publicized. The detractors of Daniel Schorr appear to include, besides Secretary of State Kissinger certainly and President Ford probably, a majority of the House of Representatives, who have set in motion an inquiry that could conceivably lead to the CBS reporter's being held in contempt of the House and in breach of its privileges.

This congressional arraignment of Schorr has cost him suspension (but on full pay) from his reporting duties at CBS while the House investigation goes forward. Representatives are furious at him for leaking excerpts of the report of the House Intelligence Committee to the Village Voice of New York. He "flew in the face of the overwhelming vote of the House", it is said, by ignoring their decision to keep the report secret.

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WE FEAR that the House Ethics Committee, with the help and backing, no doubt, of Secretary Kissinger, may be out to make an example of Schorr, who conceives it to be his obligation to make germane information public even when officials want it kept secret; the public's "continued right to know" is the issue that he sees.

It is passing curious that the Representatives are so upset about the publication of this secret report in the Village Voice, yet have made no move against Schorr for having previously reported most of the same information on television news shows over the past several weeks. It is the act of leaking material that had lost its news value, then, which has got the newsman into a legal contest with Congress.

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HE HAS ON HIS SIDE, it should be noticed, the formidable influence of the First Amendment to the Constitution and the precedent of the Supreme Court in the Pentagon Papers case. It looks to us as though the House Ethics Committee will have its problems in laying an effective hand on him.

And indeed the committee deserves to have a rough time. Schorr obviously was not the first leaker of the intelligence report; someone on the inside, either a congressman or a staff member, must have first leaked it to him, and he handed it on to the Voice. He is thus the second flouter of Congress' will, not the original one. This hardly places him in the position that Daniel Ellsberg, for example, occupied as the sole leaker of the Pentagon Papers. If the House has good sense, it will see that and cool off its anger towards Daniel Schorr.