

Ford Ban on News Of Social Events Protested by Press

WASHINGTON, July 16 (UPI)

—Four major news organizations protested to President Ford today over his policy of banning coverage of White House social receptions.

In a letter to Mr. Ford, the White House Correspondents Association, the Washington Press Club, the National Press Club and the Society for Professional Journalists (Sigma Delta Chi) said that all had taken action through their executive boards or general membership to urge the President to rescind the ban.

The policy, imposed May 9, changed a 20-year practice of allowing reporters to cover Presidential social activities paid for with Government funds that were deemed newsworthy.

"We are deeply concerned by the erosion of coverage of social events at the White House in your Administration, which from the start promised to be open and candid," the letter said.

"In so many areas, you have made good on this pledge. We note with regret, therefore, the decision to close all Presidential

receptions to coverage," the letter said.

"This is unprecedented in the modern Presidency," the letter added.

"Under the present system," the letter said, "the press is barred from covering anything beyond the formal remarks.

This seems to us to be management of news and closes off one of the historic areas of White House coverage. It also results in distorted reports from third-hand sources after the event."

The letter pointed out that the news organizations were not calling for coverage of private parties of the Ford family, but official social gatherings.