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# Himself

## The End of News?

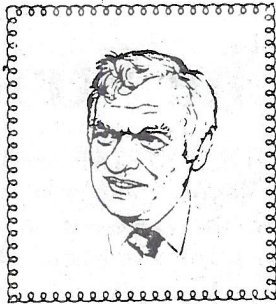
IF YOU THINK the mischief worked by the unauthorized publication of the Pentagon Papers by the derring-do activist, Mr. Daniel Ellsberg, is a thing of the past — just think again.

Thanks largely to Ellsberg's dashing disclosure of the top secret papers to *The New York Times* and others, the American press is faced with the greatest threat to its freedom since the days of Peter Zenger.

An embittered newspaper friend calls it "Nixon's Revenge." Like the Nixon appointees to the Supreme Court, much of the measure known as Senate Bill 1, is a legacy of that vengeful man which continues to survive his resignation.

Nixon's hatred of dissidence, especially about the Vietnam venture, came to a boil with the publication of the Pentagon Papers. These were really nothing that sensational. The papers confirmed the obvious; but their publication drove Mr. Nixon up the wall. The action he took against them was to try to jail anybody who ever did any such thing in the future.

To this end he called in the family lawyer, Mr. John N. Mitchell, a man whose face got plethoric at the sight of long hair. Mitchell's Justice Department was at work revising the entire criminal code of the U.S. He decided, at Mr. Nixon's direction, to fix the press for good and all. The fix is contained in the media sections of Senate Bill 1. These provisions are contained in four sections, 1121 through 1124.



THE EFFECT of these provisions, if enacted into law, would mean the end of legitimate news reporting of government affairs. Anything published which anybody high in government, especially in the Pentagon, didn't like, just wouldn't see print. If it did, both the reporter and his editor could end up in the slammer.

Sounds crazy; but it's so.

Under S.B. 1, as written, you can go to jail if convicted of communicating "a statement of fact, if false," concerning our military, our allies or our enemies, or "any other matter of fact that, if believed . . . would be likely to create general panic or serious disruption."

OF THIS SECTION the American Civil Liberties Union has said — it would "effectively destroy perhaps the most important function of a free press — the obligation to report fully and fairly in times of national crisis the discoverable facts about that crisis. It would make punishable as a major felony good faith errors in news reports."

It could be added that these "good faith errors" might easily come from the White House or other sources of government, for the purpose of entrapping a reporter. If you doubt this, just turn your mind back to the ineffable John Ehrlichman and the equally ineffable Chuck Colson.

AS WE only too painfully remember, the whole Nixon defense in the Watergate coverup was that everything was done in the interest of national security, and thus legitimately kept secret. Had S.B. 1 been in force during the coverup investigation, Mr. Nixon would still be on that big fat throne in the Oval Room in Washington. That, in fact, is the reason for the media inhibitions.

Under Section 1124 it is a crime for any present or former federal employee to disclose any kind of classified information to anyone not authorized to receive it. The fact that the information was old and out-of-date, or that it should not have been classified at all, is substantially no legal defense.

These Stop the Press items are not law yet, thank the Lord. Ask your congressman for the 750-page bill. Sections 1121 through 1124 make harrowing reading. Like, Nixonism reigns still.