

(Also SF Chronicle same date, filed Watergate.)

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Cranston vs. 'Secrecy'

U.S. Senator Alan Cranston said here last night that President Nixon's handling of the Watergate affair is indicative of the administration's attempts to "shroud government actions in secrecy."

"Never before has an administration made so many broad moves to stifle information about important domestic actions and programs," he charged.

Cranston, himself a former correspondent for International News Service, spoke before the Association of Catholic Newsmen at their annual McQuade Awards dinner.

Cranston said the latest Nixon move to keep the public in the dark is contained in a wide-ranging proposal to revise the U.S. Criminal Code.

"The proposal would," he said, "bring down an executive iron curtain on all U.S. government activities that touch on, among other things, national defense and foreign affairs."

"The proposals would sanction the classification of government documents by some 20,000 bureaucrats. And, it would become a felony punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 and seven years in prison to disclose or communicate actions of the government to public without permission from the administration."

"In short," Cranston continued, "the administration's proposal would shelter those who made incompetence, cover-up waste, bury corruption and peddle improper influence. And, anyone inside the government

who blew the whistle on them would become a criminal."

In addition, Cranston cited other attempts by the Nixon administration to squelch the flow of information:

- Attempted and successful prosecutions of newsmen who refuse to reveal confidential sources of news.

- The broadening of executive privilege to the point where it is maintained that the President has the right to keep any of the two and a half million government employees from testifying before Congress.

- Warnings that local stations are responsible for "balance" in network news and may lose their licenses if they do not take steps to insure that bias — as defined by the administration itself — is kept out of network news.