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Advertising: Campaign for War

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Prisoners Hits a Snag

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The Advertising Council and SSC&B have run into a major problem in their planned campaign on behalf of American prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. They can't get the copy cleared by the television networks.

Ostensibly, the campaign has been undertaken on behalf of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia and the American Red Cross. But, because a council spokesman indicated last spring that the White House was involved, political motivations have been suggested.

Because of this, another organization, Families For Immediate Relief, has sprung into being and has created its own public-service campaign. While the first group wants neutral inspection, the second wants a date set for the withdrawal of troops.

Alfred J. Seaman, president of SSC&B, said yesterday that the board of the council had directed him not to wait for clearance from the electronic media, but to go ahead with the print advertising. He said proofs probably would be available next week.

"We are taking the position that the total problem is complicated and political," he said, explaining the thrust of the campaign, "One side is not political, but humanitarian, and this is the condition of the prisoners of war."

"Yes, we'd like the war over immediately. The prisoners home immediately. Meanwhile there's something that can be done — let official, neutral observers in to see who the prisoners are, where they are and how they are."

"What are the American people to do about it," he was asked, "write more letters?"

No, he said, many letters have already been written. The campaign is aimed at "crystalizing public opinion . . . talking to the American public and at the same time talking to Hanoi over the shoulders of the American public. Hanoi becomes responsive to American public opinion when it becomes clearcut."

Talking to Hanoi was objected to by the American

Broadcasting Companies, which said yesterday that it had suggested that the agency revise the copy. CBS didn't find the storyboards acceptable, and questioned whether they'd be effective.

Mr. Seaman said that all three networks had asked for a Federal Communications Commission ruling on whether the TV spots would require them to run the spots from Families for Immediate Release, under the "fairness doctrine."

Frederic Papert, chairman of the PKL Companies, who has been involved with the Immediate Release group, said yesterday that 700 TV stations and 700 publications had received letters from the organization that thoroughly outlined the ramifications of the doctrine. A mailing has just started to 1,300 radio stations.

Included in each letter is a return postcard on which the outlet can check off its intent to run advertising from either source and a place to order material from Families For Immediate Release.

The council says there has not been a counter campaign to anything it's prepared in more than a quarter of a century.

Mr. Seaman said that lawyers from the National League of Families were to meet lawyers for the F.C.C. to seek an agreement. A spokesman for the commission couldn't verify this yesterday, but said that such action was not the usual practice of the F.C.C., which preferred that the broadcasters made the decision on the doctrine.

Unlike the SSC&B campaign, the Families for Immediate Release advertising, both broadcast and print, will call for letter writing—to Congressmen and the President.