

# Reactions Range From Support to a Charge of 'Near Treason'

Reactions ranging from commendation to a charge of near treason were issued by a variety of organizations yesterday in the controversy over publication by The New York Times of material from a secret Pentagon study of the Vietnam war.

Among organizations supporting publication were the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, the Association of American Publishers, the New York City Democratic Committee's Commission on Youth Affairs and a group of editors and officers of college newspapers.

The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars called The Times's action "very close to the thin edge of treason, if not treason itself."

The Associated Press Managing Editors Association, in a letter sent to Attorney General John N. Mitchell and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, said:

"The government of the United States is treading upon the most dangerous of grounds in taking legal action to prevent publication of information by The New York Times. The Associated Press Managing Editors Association strongly protests an action which reflects upon the integrity of The Times editors in making a considered judgment to publish certain information deemed by them properly in the public realm and therefore obviously not crucial to the security of the nation."

The letter continued: "The record of the newspapers of the United States has been exemplary in adhering to news judgments that take into account the nation's security. Editors have not, and do not deny the right of the government to classify information as to whether its release is vital to this security."

"But once information has been made available to editors, through whatever means, and they have had opportunity to judge it as not being crucial to security, it becomes their responsibility to resist by every means any attempt to interfere with their constitutional responsibility to publish that information for their readers."

The Times was also defended by the Association of American Publishers, a trade group representing 90 per cent of the country's book-publishing industry.

A resolution adopted by the organization's board of directors praised The Times for courage and initiative in publishing the Pentagon documents and said, "We believe that the freedom to publish without prior restraint is of vital importance in maintaining the checks and balances that are the only basis on which our democracy can survive."

**Prosecution Urged**

The Times was condemned by H. R. Rainwater, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In Bemidji, Minn., for the Minnesota V.F.W. convention, Mr. Rainwater told newsmen that The Times should be prosecuted.

to the full extent of the law. He said: "In my judgment, it is the greatest breach of trust by any newspaper in the history of this country, when The New York Times took it upon themselves to publish a classified document because The New York Times knows full well the policy of the newspaper and radio and television in this country is not, even if it's obtainable, to reproduce or present as news a classified document dealing with the national security of this country."

Mr. Rainwater continued: "Revealing for the first time the contingency plan of a war that's still in progress, that's still on in South Vietnam, places this country in a very dangerous position in a continuing war."

"The New York Times should be brought immediately to account for this. They have a responsibility. If there was no contingency plan on the war, then everyone in the Pentagon would be wrong. There must be a contingency plan, and that's the plan The New York Times is trying to reveal while we are in the middle of a war. It's very close to the thin edge of treason, if not treason itself."

herald the end of American civil liberties."

The statement was issued over nine names of college editors or college newspaper officials at the University of Virginia, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, the University of Wisconsin, Columbia University and the University of California at Berkeley and Dartmouth College.

The statement said, in part: "The Nixon Administration's action in connection with The Times series illustrated the peculiar reversal in priorities that has characterized the government's course of action during the past decade. Government officials have argued that suppression of the series is justified by the damage that would be done to United States interests abroad by further publication of the secret war document."

**Injunction Called 'Outrage'**

"But for years these same officials have explained that our involvement in foreign nations stems from the Government's overwhelming desire to destroy the civil liberties that Americans enjoy upon those nations threatened by totalitarian powers. It seems now that the Administration has become willing to sacrifice those civil liberties to the objectives of foreign policy, to enshrine a seemingly self-perpetuating series of military and diplomatic moves as an end in itself."

**College Editors' Statement**

The college editors issued a statement saying that the Nixon Administration had set "the gravest of precedents" by "successfully interfering with the freedom of the press to publish news." The editors said, "Such an action might, indeed, itself."

The Commission on Youth Affairs of the New York City Democratic Committee said that the fact that The Times was in the process of being enjoined from further publication of the Pentagon material "is an outrage."

Another reaction came from C. A. McKnight, editor of The Charlotte, N.C., Observer and the president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Mr. McKnight said that it was a personal statement and that he was not speaking for the more than 600 editors in the society.

"I would not presume to second-guess the editors of The New York Times on their decision to print the Pentagon documents, but I have very definite ideas on another issue that has arisen.

"I am appalled at this exercise of prior-restraint censorship by the Government. At the same time, I agree with the decision of The New York Times to obey the temporary Federal court restraining order.

"I have great faith in our Federal courts, and I am confident that this unprecedented effort at governmental censorship will ultimately clarify still further the responsibility of a free press in a free society.

"After consulting with our counsel, I will poll the directors of A.S.N.E. on the question of filing an amicus curiae brief either now or at a later stage in the legal proceedings if a permanent injunction is issued and appealed."

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