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Graham

SAN FRANCISCO AP —Washington Post publisher Katharine Graham says the Nixon administration is waging a deliberate campaign against the First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and press in the hope of silencing its critics.

Addressing the Commonwealth Club here Friday, Mrs. Graham said, ^{17 NOV}
“There has been a good deal of evidence of an intensified campaign to undermine public confidence, not just in the Washington Post, but in those segments of the news media which are thought to be hostile to the administration.”

The effort, she said, is “to inhibit the functioning of the press ...to sport with someting public officials should be the first to uphold—the free flow of communication between the government and the governed.”

The danger is not just to the media, she continued.

“This is also your business,” she told the predominantly businessman audience. “These are also your rights and freedoms. When the press is intimidated and circumscribed in its capacity to report and inform, it is the public that loses in the end by losing its capacity to participate in a self-governing society.”

She said an example of administration pressure on the media has been its reaction to publication of news on the Watergate affair and the Pentagon papers. Newsmen have been called before federal grand juries and ordered to disclose their confidential sources, and some have gone to jail rather than reveal them, she noted.

She said the Post's reporting on the Watergate and other alleged Republican campaign irregularities came largely from sources which were confidential because jobs and careers could be jeopardized if they were not kept that way. And to disclose them, she said, would have been to block development of a news story of national significance.

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The administration's denials of the charges, she said, were ambiguous and unsubstantiated, and were accompanied by administration charges that reporting the Watergate and related stories would “erode public confidence in government and the objectivity of the Post.”

“Sooner or later, we confidently expect our reporting will be confirmed and expanded upon--if all the facts are allowed to be brought out,” she said.

“It is nonsense to suggest that we pursued the story because of partisan motives,” she went on, pointing out that the Post freely criticized Sen. George McGovern, the Democratic candidate, during the campaign even though it wound up endorsing him.

“We covered Watergate in depth because it was news,” she said.

“We would have given the same coverage no matter what party was in power.”