

# The Harassment Of News Reporters



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**A** CONTRITE President Nixon told newsmen on April 30: "Continue to give me hell when you think I'm wrong." One week later, the Justice Department indicted Boston Globe reporter Tom Oliphant for accompanying a mercy mission, which attempted to drop food and medicine to the besieged Indians at Wounded Knee, S.D.

This appears to be a continuation of the relentless assault upon the press by the government.

Never in the nation's 200-year history has there been such a campaign of jailing, tailing, tapping, harassment and vituperation against reporters. Oliphant's mistreatment is merely the latest in a series of incidents.

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**U**NDER THE U.S. Constitution, newsmen are supposed to be free to pursue the news wherever they can find it.

In this spirit, the 27-year-old Oliphant covered the preparations for a three-plane mercy drop to the Indian militants. Then he went along on the flight and nearly lost his life in an accident. He wrote two exclusive stories about the event.

But Oliphant writes for the Boston Globe, a newspaper which displeases the White House. FBI agents, under orders from Justice Department representatives, obtained a warrant for his arrest.

First, they broke into his former home

near Boston early in the morning and terrified the occupants who were still in bed.

Oliphant, meanwhile, learned the FBI had located his new home in Washington and were preparing to descend upon it. Before they arrived he rode a bus downtown and turned himself in.

On the basis of information from an informer whom some of the prosecutors now doubt, a federal grand jury was prodded by the Justice Department to indict Oliphant. The charge: He allegedly conspired to promote a "riot" by raining food and medicine on the Indians at Wounded Knee.

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**T**HE KEY ALLEGATION against him is that he "had in his possession \$10,000 for use in obtaining aircraft and food, medicine and other supplies ..." The truth is that the newsmen left to accompany the mission on such short notice that he had only \$8 in his pocket and a credit card.

Yet Oliphant faces 15 years in prison if the Justice Department can find a jury to convict him. This is unlikely, since the prosecutors will have a hard time finding 12 citizens who will convict a newsmen for reporting the news.

However, at this writing, the case remains in the hands of those Nixon disciples who feel the President is best protected by locking up the people who write unfavorable stories.