

The Easton Express Roundtable

The Tragic Consequences Of Censorship

The Tidewater, Pa., Valley Daily
News

LIKE ALL NEWSPAPER people and, indeed, most Americans, J. R. Wiggins, editor of The Washington Post, is gravely concerned about new moves by the federal government in the direction of clamping some degree of control onto publication of news. He points out that while President Kennedy is worried about the information we are giving our enemies, newspapermen are mostly worried about the information we are not giving American citizens.

In a recent article in his paper he goes on to say that excessive secrecy not only is a threat to democratic government but threatens scientific progress, impairs the efficiency of public officials, opens an abyss between civil and military personnel and may even conceal from an enemy knowledge which would act as a deterrent.

Some of these dangers, he says, were pointed out by Lewis Mumford in his new book, "The City of History," written months before the current crisis. In commenting on 13th century Venice, he said: "The political order of Venice was

based on an ultimately demoralizing combination of violence and secrecy; its rulers used private informers and secret assassination as a commonplace weapon of control. The system must have hampered every variety of honest work, candid judgment and trustful collaboration, causing those at the center to be stifled like the members of any totalitarian system today, by their own morbid fantasies and hallucinations."

Coming up to date the author declares: "We have seen, even under the own formally democratic government in America, that any group that operates in secret, be it an Atomic Energy Commission or a National Security Council or a Central Intelligence Agency, loses touch with reality by the very terms in which it operates. What begins as the suppression of a critical opposition ends with the suppression of truth and the elimination of any alternative to the accepted policy, however patent its errors, however psychotic its plans, however fatal its commitments."

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW