

Newsman Reject 'Protective' Legislation

By VINCENT THOMAS
 Assemblyman, 68th District
 Gathering the news for dissemination to the public by newspapers, television, and radio is not without its dangers for those who do the work. That hard fact was strongly emphasized by occurrences at the Watts riots last year, and at the more recent San Francisco disturbances. Newsman were beaten, their vehicles damaged or overturned, their cameras and broadcasting equipment smashed.
 The Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs has been studying the state's civil defense and disaster programs for some months. Recently the group held a hearing in Los Angeles, at which problems that the news media encounter in reporting civil disturbances and natural disasters were discussed. Present were representatives of all three media — newspapers, TV, and radio — as well as spokesmen for the state Disaster Office and the Military Department.
 The Committee Chairman said, "The role of the press during a disaster or a civil defense operation is crucial. We must take affirmative action to keep news media access to the disaster open at all times. As an extension of the control of mob activities during a civil disturbance perhaps we ought to consider providing some protection for the news media."

SPOKESMEN for the state newspaper publishers association and the state broadcasters association informed the group that in their opinion there is no need for such protective legislation. They candidly admitted that some incidents had occurred, but said that such occurrences are part of the normal risks of the profession. Newsman have traditionally gone under fire in wars, and exposed themselves to possibly fatal danger in fires, floods, and earthquakes.
 The spokesman for the broadcasters association said that his media learned con-

siderable about their limitations and potentials during the Watts riots and more recently in San Francisco. In Watts broadcast news crews found they could not operate as neutrals. Rioters made it clear that TV crews were

"the enemy." Their vehicles were stoned, pushed around, and in one case, overturned and burned. They also learned that there are no spokesmen for mobs. Leadership was nonexistent in Watts during the

height of the riots. THE BROADCAST representatives went on to say that these were bitter lessons to learn. Traditionally, newsmen have been permitted access to all camps — to gather the news in spite of adverse

conditions. But the civil disorders have changed all this. The news media still have the responsibility of informing the public. This does not mean parroting news handouts from governmental agencies. It means gathering

the news, properly evaluating it, and reporting it in a responsible manner. THE NEWSPAPER spokesman told the group that he had checked with papers in all areas in which disasters

had been recently reported. None of them reported any difficulty in covering the disasters, and most complimented the law enforcement, fire, and other officials for their cooperation in making on-the-spot reports possible. The state Disaster Office and the Military Department announced plans for joint news centers at all disasters, but the media spokesmen joined in saying that they would not be necessary.

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Australia's great bush country is spotlighted in one of two films to be offered free Saturday and Sunday at Ferndell Nature Museum, 5375 Red Oak Drive, Griffith Park.
 Sharp contrast highlights "Australia Today," the 22-minute main feature to be presented at the Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks Department facility.
 The International Film Bureau production portrays the harsh beauty of the underdeveloped wild country and the hard lives of farmers and sheepmen.

IN THE LATTER portion of the film, scenes of modern Australian cities are presented to show the growing use of aviation, mechanization and scientific productions in opening Australia's hinterlands.
 The second feature, "Asphalt through the Ages," traces the history of the use of asphalt for building purposes from ancient times to the present.

The films will be screened alternately and continuously from 1 to 5 p.m. both days, according to John Houk.

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