Daily Texan, Regents Continue Fight Over Freedom, Responsibility

By PAUL BURKA

AUSTIN — (SPL.) — Three proposals to limit the Daily Texan editor's control of editorial policy are the latest in a series of encroachments upon student press freedom at the University of Texas.

The Texan, which last year received the American Collegiate Press “Pacemaker” award as the nation's top University newspaper, has been under fire from the University's Board of Regents for “editorial and fiscal irresponsibility.”

The source of the latest threat to Texan editorial freedom came not from the regents, however, but from the Board of Directors of Texas Publications, Inc., a semi-independent corporation which publishes the Texan.

The student-controlled Publications Board, whose nine voting members include the president of the student assembly, four assemblymen, two journalism professors, and two other professors, passed a three-part proposal Tuesday afternoon in an attempt to solve the problem of Texan editorial policy.

Appoint Committee

The proposal took the form of a suggestion to a committee of twelve Texas newspaper editors, appointed by the Regents to serve as an advisory committee on student publications.

Possible means of handling the problem were:

- Creating a student committee to share with the editor responsibility for formulating editorial policy.
- Appointing another editorial manager to work with the editor for planning and preparation of the editorial page.
- Allocating funds to pay additional Texas editorial writers who would function independently of the editor.

Likes Spirit

The proposal emerged from a meeting called to consider a resolution proposed by student board member Jim Lederer. Lederer, unhappy because Texan editor Kaye Northcott had refused his request for a school spirit editorial after the Texas Longhorns lost three football games, asked that an editorial board be created to give the students some voice in determining editorial policy.

TSP tabled Lederer’s request Monday after lengthy debate, but passed the suggestion for the editors Tuesday. Miss Northcott strongly opposed both actions.

The Texan Editor contended that TSP student politicians did not understand the nature of a newspaper and should not be allowed to determine editorial policy. She also disputed Lederer’s contention that the Texan

See DAILY on Page 3
Daily Texan Continues Fight

(Continued from Page 1) should reflect student opinion.

Admonish Manager

The Board also admonished Editorial Manager Sidney Nolan to enforce TSP rules against personal attacks in editorials, particularly anything which might be construed as an attack upon regents. Such inflammatory action would be "extremely dangerous at this time," said Norris Davis, director of the Department of Journalism and author of the three-part proposal which passed Tuesday.

The Texan editorialized against the actions of its publisher by reflecting the editor's right to control policy and by suggesting that TSP was motivated by fear of the Regents, not concern over any editorial irresponsibility.

Threats Made

The current confrontation with the regents actually began with a guest editorial attacking United States actions in Viet Nam. The editorial appeared October 24 and provoked Regents' vice-chairman Frank Erwin to immediate action. He threatened to make the Texan a laboratory for the Department of Journalism, or else to remove the paper from the financial support of the blanket tax.

The newsmen are unquestionably on the Texan's side; this was even more evident after a Wednesday night visit by the committee to observe the staff in operation. The editors met Wednesday in a day-long closed session on the University campus, but did not discuss Texan editorial policy at length.

Question Pay

Instead, they questioned low pay scales for Texan workers and the small number of non-journalism majors writing for the Texan, Committee Chairman Bob Jackson of the Corpus Christi Caller-Times said.

Non-journalism majors had also caught the attention of Regent Heath, who fears the possibility of "infiltration" of the Texan by outside groups. The current danger lies primarily within the corporate structure of TSP, where the board is hardly the champion of editorial freedom.

Many Aspects

Journalism Professor and TSP Treasurer Olin Hinkle told a journalism student this week that a newspaper has many important aspects. News reporting and advertising are the most important and editorial expression is the least. If something has to be sacrificed to retain the others, editorial freedom should obviously go, he said.

Hinkle, like Heath, fears the non-journalism influence on the Texan. Last year when former Thresher-Sports Editor and Editorial Assistant Paul Burka filed for editor of the Texan, Hinkle told Miss Northcott that there was a "Rice plot to take over the Daily Texan"; this year he successfully stalemated an editorial appointments committee called to approve the selection of Burka and 1964-65 Thresher Editor Hugh Rice Kelly as editorial assistants.

Leery of Freedom

Other members of the TSP board are likewise leery of complete editorial freedom for the Texan. Ex-officio member Jack Holland, Dean of Students, suggested that TSP re-evaluate its handbook to give the editorial manager tighter control over what appears in the paper.

The editorial manager currently is empowered to withhold news or editorial copy which conflicts with good taste provisions in the handbook or which violates state libel law.

Even the students on the board are not wholly behind the Texan in its struggle for editorial freedom. One student member of the board is an aspiring politician and cannot oppose Erwin, a close friend of Gov. John Connally and formed National Democratic Committee. Several student board members reflect the basically conservative character of the student assembly and therefore are opposed to the traditionally liberal editorial policies of the Texan.