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Harsh media disclosure bill is passed by House

By John Camper
Of Our Springfield Bureau

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — "The press says you ought to be naked before the people of Illinois! The press stripped you nude! You've got to have the guts to make them do the same!"

With those words of Rep. C. L. McCormick ringing in their ears, cheering and booing House members gleefully passed a much stronger income disclosure bill for reporters than they had been willing to pass for themselves.

The vote was 103 to 33. The action Tuesday was the culmination of months of legislative bitterness and resentment toward the press over the governmental ethics issue. It reached crescendo proportions during the last few days as lawmaker after lawmaker accused the news media of stampeding them into laying bare their financial secrets.

THE ETHICS "stampede" began last January, shortly after the revelation that the late Sec. of State Paul Powell, a long-time friend of

McCormick, had left some \$800,000 cash in shoeboxes in his apartment closet.

It took the House 10 months, filled with commission hearings, committee hearings, and floor debate, before it grudgingly passed an ethics and income disclosure bill Tuesday, with many lawmakers saying they expected the bill to be watered down in the Senate.

But it took them only three legislative days to pass McCormick's bill requiring income disclosure by owners and employes of the news media.

The bill was introduced Friday and advanced to the passage stage without reference to committee, a seldom-used move employed to rush legislation.

MANY lawmakers complained they weren't given copies of the bill or its amendments, which were adopted moments before the bill was passed, another unusual move.

"There's something unusual going on here," said Rep. Daniel Pierce (D-Highland Park). "This bill should have gone to committee like any other bill."

The governmental ethics bill requires legislators and other public officials to disclose publicly only the names of the corporations in which they hold stock, names of creditors and names of other economic interests. Specific dollar amounts would be kept secret by the state's ethics board.

Under McCormick's bills, reporters, officers and owners of news media would have to state publicly the identity of all their economic interests and the specific dollar amounts.

A reporter who failed to file a statement could be fined \$1,000. A legislator who did the same would be ineligible for office until he filed.

"THE PEOPLE have called for complete cleanliness of everything that has anything to do with public life in Illinois," said McCormick, a Vienna Republican who was convicted of income tax evasion in 1967.

McCormick's bill was drafted by David Epstein, an aide to another long-time Powell crony, House Minority Leader Clyde L. Choate (D-Anna). Republicans have accused Choate of trying to scuttle the governmental ethics bill with killing amendments.

McCormick's bill also would subject reporters to a \$5,000 fine and a year in jail for acting as paid lobbyists for their employers. It would require newspapers to disclose the amount and cost of political advertising they run and would require them to charge the same rates for political adver-