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ORIGIN ACTION

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Action Taken
APR 3 7 01 AM 1970

Date of Action

FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK

DATE: March 30, 1970

Action Office Symbol

SUBJECT : Apparent Shelving of Bill Concerning Thai Judiciary

Name of Officer

REF : Bangkok's A-140, March 6, 1970

It would appear that the Government has decided to shelve the draft bill on the Thai Judiciary presented by the Minister of Justice and approved by the Cabinet in principle on February 17. The bill had aroused a storm of protest among the judiciary from the Supreme Court President down, lawyers, university faculty and students, and parliamentarians of all parties.

The Bangkok Post reported March 27 that Justice Minister Chamroon Netisart's Secretary had told the paper that the ministry did not deem the introduction of the bill an urgent matter, adding that the Legal Advisory Committee of the Cabinet, which had been charged with the responsibility of giving the final touches to the bill, had not met on the matter.

Chamroon's Secretary's statement would seem to be a plain indication that the government plans simply to drop the bill, rather than attempt to modify it to remove the elements in it that the judiciary see as a threat to their independence. In this connection, M.P. Prasit Choopinit, Government Party spokesman and a lawyer himself, told Embassy Officers on March 26 that the SPT would vote against the bill if it were presented to Parliament, and that while it had some worthwhile features, these were unimportant and he favored dropping the whole bill.

The whole affair has been another demonstration of the way the Thai Cabinet tends as a body to pay rather little attention to

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matters that appear to fall within the exclusive competence of individual members, thereby occasionally letting the less politically acute ministers slip through what turn out to be political bombshells. More importantly, it has also been another demonstration of the far greater sensitivity of the RTG to public opinion in this present era of constitutional government, and its willingness to accommodate itself to public opinion when the occasion warrants.

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