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Unscrupulous promoters capitalize on public sympathy for POWs

WASHINGTON (AP) - The young woman seemed to be fighting back tears as she talked on in jail on a bad check conviction the telephone about the prisoners gained the cooperation of POWof war in Vietnam.

"Well, the publishing charge runs a total of \$5, and God knows we need the help if we're ever going to get our men out of there," she said.

That appeal brought in thousands of dollars from residents abruptly departed town, leaving of Orange County, Calif., who thought they might help the POWs by placing their names, for \$5 each, in an obscure tabloid called Veterans News.

The Orange County district attorney's office closed the operation by court injunction this summer, charging it with "false, fraudulent, deceptive, or misleading" representations, and found a convicted armed robber in

The incident is just one of an increasing number where selfpromoters have capitalized on public sympathy for the plight of the POWs or on the tendency for families of prisoners or men missing in action to grasp at any

-A California promoter now MIA family groups in California and Arizona for fund-raising activities which left the organization holding the financial bag.

-A Texas promoter lured an Atlanta POW group into grandiose plans for a benefit show, then a string of unpaid bills behind

lawyer and lists addresses in Idaho and Amsterdam has approached POW family groups in Miami, Norfolk, Va., and Phoenix, asking \$25,000 to finance negotiations with Buddhist monks to care for prisoners in North Vietnamese camps. So far as is known, he hasn't collected a dime on his pitch. -Four men and a woman hired

teen-agers to solicit on street corners in Jackson, Miss., for the POW cause, and got out of town a step ahead of the police after three days of collections.

As the petition-signing and

this year, so has the fund raising.

The State Department privately takes a dim view of most of the fund raising activities. Officials question what could be done with the money that would benefit imprisoned or missing men. The exception is the National Its leader, Jack K. Armstrong, League of Families of Prisoners and Missing, to which the government lends its tacit support as representing POW and MIA

Another gorup which has had some success is the Committee of Liaison, headed by Cora Weiss, in New York. Mrs. Weiss says the committee has spent \$10,000 over the past 18 months. Most of the money, she said, has come from small, unsolicited donations.

Veterans News opened its Orange County operation in May. served time in jail during 1965 after pleading guilty to armed robbery. His record also lists a bad-conduct discharge from the Marines and court-martial convictions for unauthorized absence and theft of a .45 caliber pistol.

Insurance benefit plans are exempted from freeze

of Living Council Wednesday allowed what it said were the first exemptions to the wageprice freeze by allowing new government-funded group-insurance benefit programs to go into effect in Florida, Texas, and Missouri.

In a statement, the council said letter-writing for the POWs and the exemptions were being made

WASHINGTON (A)-The Cost because prior group insurance plans had been dropped in anticipation of the new plans.

"A failure to grant the exemptions would have left the employes involved either without insurance programs or forced them to make payments' substantially higher than under previous programs," the council statement

"The council felt that the latter situation would have caused an undue hardship to many of the lower-paid employes in the groups.'

The council ruling affects employe groups in Columbia County, Fla., the Missouri Teachers' Association and the Texas Public Employes' Association.

The council said director George Lincoln of the Office of Emergency Preparedness had recommended that the exemptions be granted.

"The council also noted that in all three cases details of the new plans had been made public and employes were being enrolled prior to the freeze," the council

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to avoid penalty.

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