

## The Temporary Lapse of the Licensing Act in England

### ABSTRACT

In 1679, the Licensing Act suddenly lapsed in England because of the political tension surrounding the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill. Just after the lapse, a flood of unlicensed newspapers appeared. For example, *Domestic Intelligence* printed by Benjamin Harris came out on July 9, 1679.

In May 1680 unlicensed newspapers were suppressed by proclamation. But the political circumstances were less hostile to unofficial papers, and after a short period, unlicensed papers reappeared.

Shortly after James II accession, the Licensing Act was renewed, indicating a stringent policy towards the press.

The period when the Licensing Act lapsed temporarily led to an end to state control over the press in 1695, when the Licensing Act finally ended.

**Key Words:** Licensing Act, English newspaper, Freedom of press