



SFExaminer

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'Newsmen Ignore Anti-Secrecy Law'

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Newsmen and government agencies alike have ignored a four-year-old anti-secrecy law designed to increase public access to the bureaucracy's files, a House subcommittee chairman declared today.

Rep. William S. Moorhead, (D-Pa.), chairman of the House Government Information subcommittee, released an analysis by the panel showing how federal agencies have reacted to the Freedom of Information Act.

He criticized newsmen for failing to use it more often and attacked agencies for trying to circumvent it.

Moorhead said nearly 2200 requests for access to federal records were denied completely or in part. For each refusal, 17 requests were granted, he added.

'Worst Offender'

Many government agencies "seem to be doing everything possible to ignore" the law, he asserted. But others, "and the Air Force is the worst offender, try to make their information operations look good by claiming that thousands of requests for routine government documents are actu-

ally demands for access under the Freedom of Information Act."

Some agencies, he said, "keep no records and apparently have no interest in implementing the law." He cited the Civil Service Commission as an example.

Moorhead said corporations and lawyers representing private interests appear to be using the law the most: "Those who can afford the expensive and time-consuming process of fighting for their right to know will do so."

Media Criticized

Moorhead said he is "surprised, however, that the reporters, editors and broadcasters whose job it is to inform the American people have made so little use of the Freedom of Information Act. They were the major supporters of those in Congress who created the law."

"The free and responsible press is the keystone of an informed, democratic society and it should be the major user of the law designed to guarantee the people's right to know."

The analysis covered the period from July 4, 1967, when the law took effect, to July 4, 1971.