

Moorhead Finds 'Errors' in Nixon's Secrecy Order

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The chairman of the House Subcommittee on Government Information asserted today that President Nixon's new executive order on secrecy in regard to national security documents had "major policy deficiencies" and "obvious technical errors."

Representative William S. Moorhead, Democrat of Pennsylvania, was more specific than in criticism he made earlier and said the order would undoubtedly require amendment before it went into effect on June 1.

The President's order, issued March 8, was intended to reduce the secrecy surrounding national security documents by limiting the use of "top secret," "secret," and "confidential" classifications and by speeding up the process of making such documents available to the public.

Mr. Moorhead, while lauding the intent of the executive order, charged that it was a "shoddy technical effort." He based his statement to the House on what he said was a section-by-section staff analysis.

The order "increases the limitation on the number of persons who can wield classification stamps and restricts public access to lists of persons having such authority," Mr. Moorhead said.

A member of his staff said that the 1,860 persons authorized to classify documents "top secret" could designate an unlimited number of subordinates to use the "secret" classification. They, in turn, may authorize their subordinates to use "confidential."

Thus, he said, a pyramid of "thousands and thousands" of persons will be able to classify documents. That would limit public access to the documents because the level of classifica-

tion did not make any difference—any classified document would not be made available.

Mr. Moorhead said that the order "contains no requirement to depart from the general declassification rules even when classified information no longer requires protection."

Under the order, "the top secret" papers are to be made public in 10 years, "secret" in 8, and "confidential" in 6, unless they are exempted. Mr. Moorhead, the staff member said,

believes that a paper should be immediately declassified when the reasons for classifying it no longer obtains, rather than wait for the specified time.

Mr. Moorhead also asserted in his criticism that the order "broadens authority for the use of special categories of classification." These include labels such as "for official use only," under which material can be kept from the public even though it is not eligible for classification.