

# Secrecy Called a Cloak for Failure

## New York

A Time magazine writer said yesterday that newsmen and Congressmen should be less tolerant of official Washington secrecy: it unnecessarily infringes upon "the people's right to know."

In an essay by senior correspondent John L. Steele, the magazine said the Government itself should restrict the improper use of secrecy by its departments.

"Secrecy is all too often used as an easy cover for operational failures, as a mask for individual or collective mistakes in policymaking, as a shield for actual wrongdoing and as a cloak to hide the undertaking of a new and often costly commitment," Steele said.

"In part, the prevalence of covert dealings indicates that the different branches of government simply do not trust one another very much these days."

## ACTION

The essay recommended action at several levels to correct the situation:

"The news media . . . could better serve the public interest by being less considerate of the sensibilities of government officials who try to manage the news. . .

"Congress could beef up its pathetically weak investigatory and budget analysis staffs . . . it could also cut back substantially on discre-

tionary funds granted to the President for use abroad as he sees fit. . .

"The State Department could, and should, be far less bending to the secrecy pleas of allied and client governments . . . the Defense Department should be ordered to stop penalizing employees who disclose facts of cost overruns and mismanagement. . .

"The White House could and should be more forthright in its disclosures of military operations and diplomatic agreements."

## MODEL

The essayist cited postwar nonpartisanship in major diplomatic dealings as a model that might well be revived.

"A little more than 20 years ago . . . a Democratic administration under Harry Truman and key Senate Republicans led by Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan established a remarkable non-partisan relationship . . . that permitted such historic undertakings as the Marshall Plan and the NATO treaty. . .

"This kind of open policymaking can be entered into again, but only through more and continued emphasis on full, non-self-serving disclosure. . . Excessive secrecy is a fatal disease that could be fatal to the practice of modern democracy itself."

*United Press*