Public Held Thwarted on Data Access

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By MARJORIE HUNTER
Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, Sept. 21
A House subcommittee reported today that “foot-dragging by the Federal bureaucracy” had impeded the effective operation of the Freedom of Information Act.

The findings of the Government Operations Subcommittee were based on 41 days of hearings into the administration of the Freedom of Information Act.

The subcommittee said it had maximum critical of what it called Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton “is the most photogenic member of the Administration” and the department’s communication program should give him “maximum exposure” in order to build “valuable goodwill for the department and the Administration.”

The report cited a case in which the Interior Department had hired a former Nixon campaign aide, Harry Treleaven, to recommend improvements in the department’s public information programs.

The department subsequently refused to make public the Treleaven report, even when asked to do so under the Freedom of Information Act, the subcommittee reported. Finally, the report continues, the department did make public the report but it had censored one paragraph.

The subcommittee said it had later learned that the censored paragraph stated that Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton “is the most photogenic member of the Administration” and the department’s communications program should give him “maximum exposure” in order to build “valuable goodwill for the department and the Administration.”

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