

this as testimony. He told how a public housing authority in Pennsylvania was investigated by the Federal Public Housing Authority, which kept its report secret, saying local officials could make the report public if they chose. In other words, the officials whose own conduct was investigated were given the power of censorship over a report on their own performance. Naturally, they chose to suppress the report.

NEA has kept its membership informed in every possible way about the progress of this legislation. Through weekly and monthly newsletters to our members, through the pages of NEA's fortnightly newspaper, Publishers' Auxiliary, and the NEA monthly magazine, National Publisher, the hometown press has been constantly informed about the progress of this pending legislation. NEA regards the Long and Moss bills as perhaps the most important legislation affecting the press now pending before Congress.

In 1964, NEA instituted an award of merit. The first recipient was Representative John E. Moss, who was singled out for his long fight for freedom of information. Last week this award was made for the second time and the recipient was Senator Edward V. Long, also for his right-to-know efforts. These awards should signify how important NEA regards leadership roles in the struggle to achieve freedom of information at all levels.

NEA believes that there is a crying need for legislation to force the Federal Government to cease suppression of information which the public has a right to know. This bill is a step in that direction. We of the press wish it were stronger and did not contain so many exceptions, some couched in broad language which we feel would allow bureaucrats to withhold what they should reveal. We realize, however, that any change at all is difficult to achieve and if it is the judgment of this subcommittee and the Congress that this is the strongest freedom of information bill that can become law, we will support that decision and back the pending bill without strengthening amendments.

NEA was distressed by the testimony presented to your subcommittee by a Justice Department spokesman on March 30. An Assistant Attorney General presented 10 pages of testimony to this body, the first 3½ pages devoted to honeyed words about "a steady flow of information" being "truly the lifeblood of our democratic system." These were fine assertions and we heartily concur.

However, the Department of Justice official after completing his remarks in tribute to the cause of freedom of information negated his position by devoting the final six and one-half pages of his presentation to telling you the bill might be unconstitutional, that its whole approach is "impossible" and would "adversely affect the public interest." In short, the Assistant Attorney General argued against any law that would substitute for "executive judgment and discretion."

Of all the untenable positions for a Federal official to take. Of all the affronts to sincere men like Congressman Moss who have been turning up instance after instance of suppression of information, for the convenience of the bureaucrats, and contrary to the public interest. The Justice Department concedes the public has the right to know, but only what the departmental executive chooses to reveal. What an insult to Congress. What an invitation to you gentlemen to pass a strong bill and put a powerful, headstrong bureaucracy in its place.

Apparently the administration does not take this legislation seri-