

None of Your Business

ment House Leader
the final decision in
should rest with the
He advocated an
man to review cases of
with the minister of
ing the right to deny
t. If the minister feels
ested is at all sensitive
ernment, the secrecy

l decision should rest
body - the courts or
information requested
ld hurt the government
remains on

laints board with the
urt.
Act, in the opinion of
ld, would be one that
information is freely
c, as part of its basic

early-defined exemp-
mean amending the
and perhaps other
prohibit disclosure of
lly in the area of

tion laws led a
e of parliament who
ional conference on
tion in Austria to
ians, along with the
ost antiquated laws
f government docu-
rld (sic)."

ly two freedom of
draw upon, the U.S.
U.S. first passed a
law in 1966, but the
ot being followed. In
s were passed which
t to take the case to
or information was
automatically takes
e top of the court list
quickly as possible. It
t information is

lties for a U.S. civil
withholds or denies
The penalty is paid
esponsible.

with the government,
cy syndrome

has a Government
which allows an
nd correct personal

ess to government
in the Constitution
ople have the right
those exempted by
ecy Law of 1936. It
nt to decide on the
secret. When the
s the classification



the case goes to the Supreme
Administrative Board or the Parliamentary
Ombudsman. The final decision rests with
the Minister.

The Canadian government has already
made a move in the direction of the U.S.
model concerning access to personal files
in government departments and agencies.
It will give an individual the right to
request, inspect and correct personal files.

**"Democratic progress requires the ready
availability of true and complete
information"**

This means erroneous or misleading
information will be corrected. It is not yet
clear whether this proposed act will allow
groups access to their files or whether the
individual has the right of appeal if denied
access to the file.

What a freedom of information act
would do is to bring about accountability.
Politicians and bureaucrats would be held
accountable to the public for their acts. In
1964, before entering politics, Trudeau
used to speak of participatory democracy.

It now remains to be seen if "right to know"

**legislation will be passed by a
"no comment" government**

"Democratic progress requires the
ready availability of true and complete
information. In this way people can
objectively evaluate the government's

policies. To act otherwise is to give way to
despotic secrecy," he said.

The proposed legislation, if and when it
comes, will indicate whether Trudeau will
hold to his thinking. It seems with the
ascendancy to power of any government
the urge to withhold information and to
protect bureaucratic secrets grows. It now
remains to be seen if "right to know"
legislation will be passed by a "no
comment" government.

The most radical Act, in the opinion of most

experts in the field, would be one that simply

stated all information is freely available

to the public, as part of the basic

"right to know."