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*The Paper Explosion* 6 OCT 1966

One of the most optimistic footnotes to the current news is that Washington is in less danger of being engulfed in its mountains of paper. A report by Chairman Robert N. C. Nix of the House Subcommittee on Census and Statistics assures us that the perils from obsolete and overextended files are not as great as they were a few years ago. In some measure the avalanche of directives, reports, forms, memos and reviews has yielded to scientific management. But the comfort that may be derived from the report is still marginal.

Paper-pushing remains a dominant Federal pre-occupation. A large part of the time of all Government employes is given to it. The Nix Committee estimates the cost of this paperwork at \$8 billion. It requires 360,000 different forms. Federal directives alone run to 2.6 million pages a year. Another phase of the paper escalation may be seen in the fact that President Franklin Roosevelt received 140,000 letters a year; President Kennedy, 307,312; and President Johnson receives 825,750.

The improvements have come largely in the more efficient housing of records and in stepped-up disposal. The Federal Records Centers have saved immense sums because they provide storage space at 21 cents per cubic foot instead of \$3.85 per cubic foot of records in offices. Even so, the Committee found a vast surplusage of records still cluttering offices. Far too many records are still designated as permanent. Too many permanent records are intermixed with temporary files, and much of the temporary stuff is kept beyond the period of conceivable usefulness.

Let no one suppose that the choking of government with surplus paper concerns only bureaucrats. Aside from the enormous cost of filing and storing the endless output of documents, governmental efficiency is impaired by the loss of really useful data in the paper wilderness. And a vast number of the forms and reports that are hoarded by government agencies are made out by citizens and business establishments. One of the foremost recommendations of the Nix Committee is that "the burden of paperwork imposed on the citizens by our Government should be greatly reduced."

It is good to know that the National Archives and Records Service of the GSA is continuing a determined assault on the blizzards of paper and that a congressional committee is watchful. An alert public will also be necessary if the menace of suffocation by paper is to be turned back.

*Speech*  
**The Paper Explosion**

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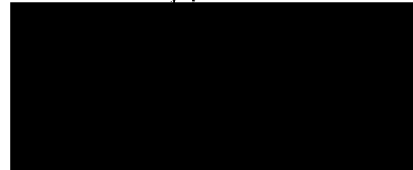
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