

## ➤ **Declaration of Right to Public Access to Information**

"Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people." These words from the preamble of the Constitution of Japan clearly express the principle of the sovereignty of the people, a universal principle of mankind.

In violation of this principle and in contradiction to the indisputable truth that the power of the government belongs to the people, important information concerning the power of government has for a long time been kept beyond the reach of the people. The most significant reason for this is that the people's right to know, which is inherent in the concept of the sovereignty of the people, has been disregarded. Through our experience in the past war~, we ourselves have suffered the bitter result that can occur when the eyes and the ears of the people are blocked and they are isolated from fundamental information concerning the operation of government .

As is already well-known, the lives, health, and security of the people have been threatened and injured by dangers such as pollution, defective pharmaceutical products and others. If it had not been for the improper handling and concealment of information by government ministries and agencies, the sources of such perils may have been rapidly determined and the resulting damage minimized. In addition, closed door politics has resulted in the repeated occurrence of cases of the waste of public funds and corruption involving high government officials, culminating in the Lockheed scandal. Even now a true understanding of such cases lies hidden in a dark mist. Can this be called a system of government with the people as sovereign?

Contemporary government is characterized by an extreme expansion and strengthening of administrative authority. In the information society of today, such extreme administrative power has resulted in government monopolization and management of information. This has occurred despite the fact that information held by public institutions is originally the common property of the people. To grant public access to such common property is no more than the natural duty of the government as servant of the people.

James Madison one of the authors of the United States Constitution, chose these words to identify the freedom to participate in the acts of government as a condition necessary to the preservation of democracy. "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or tragedy, or

perhaps both." Further, according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the right of freedom of expression "shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers."

We firmly believe that a system providing concrete protection for the right to know is indispensable to the preservation of human rights and democracy and hereby solemnly declare that we hold the right to freely request and to use all publicly held information.