

BELLA S. ABZUG
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COMMITTEES:
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
PUBLIC WORKS

file my

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

February 2, 1976

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Inter Natural Gas

Dear Colleague:

FEB 3 1976

On Tuesday, Feb. 3, an extraordinary procedure will take place on the floor of the House. Under pressure from the oil and gas industry, the Rules Committee will bring forth a rule that, in effect, discharges the Commerce Committee from orderly study of long-term natural gas legislation and makes an immediate vote on the Krueger deregulation substitute in order. I urge your vote against this rule, which is a serious disruption of the legislative process.

In the event the rule is adopted, however, I shall offer an amendment to the Krueger substitute which would extend coverage of the Freedom of Information Act to geologic and geophysical information and data regarding gas wells on federal lands that are now exempt from disclosure, other than information required to be kept secret for national defense or foreign policy reasons, information specifically exempted from disclosure by statute and trade secrets.

The current exemption of such data from the Act provides strong encouragement to producers to withhold gas supplies. Just how extensively this loophole is abused is anyone's guess. However, a case in point emerged at a recent hearing of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee. Testimony at a January 23 hearing revealed that one producer -- Mobil Oil Company -- planned to sit on a 450 billion cubic foot field of gas until the Federal Power Commission agreed to favorable contract terms sought by Mobil. These included a shorter than usual duration of the sales contract and dedication of only a portion of the gas.

Because the inducement to withhold information is strong, the Mobil case may be just the tip of a gigantic iceberg. The only way to find out is to get to the underlying data and make it available to the public. My amendment would accomplish that purpose, and I strongly urge its adoption.

Sincerely,

Bella S. Abzug
BELLA S. ABZUG
Member of Congress