

"Special Policemen"

Post 814141

In a letter printed on this page today Mr. LeRoy Westbury, president of the United States Special Police Association, accuses The Post of making "a serious error" in an editorial appearing on July 27 under the caption of "Special Policemen." This "error" apparently consists of our reference to special policemen designated by the Metropolitan Police and paid by private companies without specifically drawing a distinction between that group and the special policemen who guard buildings and grounds for the Federal Government. There was no misunderstanding of the facts on our part, as a careful reading of the editorial will indicate. To clear away any possible misinterpretation of the editorial, however, we are glad to say that it in no way refers to the United States Special Police. Incidentally, the present confusion over use of the term "special police" would be eliminated by a bill recently passed by the House and now before a Senate committee. That bill would designate the guards of Federal buildings and grounds in Washington as the United States Building Police. We believe the change is in order, and probably the salary adjustments provided for in the same bill, too.

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On Sunday, July 27, the usually reliable Washington Post made a serious editorial error. The editorial was headlined "Special Policemen" and outlined the fallacy of granting law-enforcement powers to special police not under the District's authority. May we go on record, first, as agreeing with the editorial's point of view—on that score. However, special policemen, as understood and identified by this editorial, can be and are appointed solely under constituted authority vested in the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia. In a great many cases, though not all of them, these are men retired from the Metropolitan force!

Furthermore, and this is the important thing, the bill now under consideration in Congress can be and is only a Federal matter and deals solely with special police already under Federal jurisdiction, and in all cases, already vested with full police authority and law-enforcement powers, but as restricted by law to Federal properties and premises. The bill provides specifically for recognition of this fact in renaming the forces affected, and for pay increases commensurate with the actual performance of these legally delegated powers to this specific body of police officers.

We regret exceedingly that The Post could have such an incomplete understanding of the facts, that it would permit an editorial expression setting out these glaring inconsistencies, and in an editorial to create such an unfair misconception in the minds of the general public.

LEROY WESTBURY
President, United States Special
Police Association.
Washington, July 31.