

Trashmen Accused Of 'Spying' on Waste

By Robert L. Asher
Staff Reporter

The wife of a prominent attorney here says she's piled up a heap of evidence that her trashmen are really some kind of undercover agents.

The National Capital Area Civil Liberties Union, lifted the lid on the case yesterday in a letter to Brig. Gen. Charles M. Duke, the District's Engineer Commissioner.

David Carlner, chairman of the ACLU branch, said his office has investigated the woman's claim that "instead of being slung into the trash collectors' truck and comingled with all the other trash," the complainant's trash is put in a separate container.

At the depot, it is "inventoried and thereafter apparently examined," he charged.

Protests to Department

Carlner's letter said the Union is "shocked by this information. No government agency, either Federal or District, has been given an all-seeing eye so that trash collectors, . . . can piece together our torn up letters, our doodling, our cancelled checks, our paid or perhaps unpaid bills, after we have thrown them all away for none to see."

He said the woman, whom he would not name, had protested to the Sanitation Department.

In an interview later Car-

liner explained that the case began about a month ago, when the woman checked the Georgetown depot in search of a misplaced telephone-address book.

She was told that "we have four bags of your trash here that we're inventorying but we can't release them to you," Carlner reported.

He said that since then, some of his acquaintances have snooped on the alleged snoopers and found indeed that her trash is segregated.

Investigation Ordered

The Department of Sanitation referred all queries yesterday to the "top echelon." Upstairs at the District Building, Gen. Duke ordered an investigation.

There have been complaints in the past that some trashmen have rifled refuse for saleable items. City officials indicated they feel this practice has ceased as a result of the outcry.

Carlner likened it to telephone tapping, interception of mail and peeping through windows. For these reasons he dumped the case on the Commissioners, who will now sift through the charges.