

Cohen Rejects Request For IRS Wiretap Data

Associated Press

Sheldon S. Cohen, top Federal tax collector, rejected repeated requests of a Senate subcommittee yesterday to turn over detailed records of wiretapping, two-way mirrors and other tactics used in trailing and prosecuting suspected tax dodgers.

But Cohen, who became Commissioner of Internal Revenue in January, conceded that a few of his 60,000 employes may have engaged in illegal or questionable methods.

Under stiff questioning by Sen. Edward V. Long (D-Mo.), Cohen said he has a full-dress investigation of the IRS now under way by its own inspectors.

When the Revenue Service "gets to the bottom of the facts," Cohen promised to supply the Senate investigating panel with answers to any question asked.

But he told Chairman Long that it would be against the law to divulge confidential information about suspected taxpayers or revenue agents accused of bribes.

"I am not going to hold any individuals up to public ridicule," Cohen said.

Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach testified that unauthorized wiretappings by

internal revenue agents cannot be condoned but have been isolated incidents arising from zeal in the Government's war against organized crime.

The Nation's leading racketeers "will stop at nothing to discredit the Federal effort against them," Katzenbach said.

He said the Government has lost more than 25 informants to underworld vengeance in the past four years. "We have been unable to bring hundreds of other cases because key witnesses would not testify for fear of the same fate," he added.

Cohen, without naming names, said four tax evasion investigations in the Pittsburgh area had involved use of wiretaps and a "bug." He said these were "four cases where devoted and courageous agents acted in a misguided and unauthorized effort to abate some of the terror of organized crime."

The Commissioner said he had ordered a more complete investigation of the four cases, and had notified IRS agents that the use of illegal wiretaps is prohibited. He told of the Pittsburgh cases in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure.