

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round

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—With Les Whitten

WASHINGTON — In seemingly innocuous but prying little ways, the federal government is compiling data on millions of Americans. This could extinguish the right of privacy and lead to a regimented society in this land of the free.

Federal snoops, for example, can consult a 452-page manual which will tell them how to track down the most obscure personal details about almost anyone, anywhere.

A Metropolitan Opera singer? Check "Opera Biographies," published in London by Werner Laurie. A New Jersey hog farmer? The manual advises: "Hog farmers who feed garbage are required to obtain a license from the Department of Agriculture."

Or do you want to locate a divorced construction worker of Croatian descent? No problem. Just look up his marriage and divorce papers. You can also check with the construction union and the Croatian-American Association.

This exhaustive handbook on snooping is called "Where's What," with the subtitle, "Sources of Information for Federal Investigators." It was compiled in 1965 by Harry J. Murphy, who was then an investigator for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Perhaps significantly, the CIA gave him a year's leave at the Brookings Institution to work on the project. He returned to the CIA but has now retired. He stressed to us that the investigative techniques suggested in his book were used by the CIA only to check prospective employes, not to spy on citizens.

Nonetheless, the CIA keeps tabs on hundreds of thousands of Americans who have absolutely no wish to work for the CIA.

This can best be done, apparently, through the government itself. According to Murphy's handbook, the federal government offers a smorgasbord of information about the citizenry. Selective Service and military records, income tax returns, social security files and even census records can be pried open by federal snoops.

Just about every time a citizen rubs against the government, whether it be to license a business, register a car, claim unemployment insurance or even purchase savings bonds, he must leave behind his life history.

Much of the information is of no practical value to anyone except some bureaucrat with a Big Brother complex.

For page after page, Murphy also tells how to dig out information from private sources. He relates, for example, how he tracked down a nameless Hungarian airplane-parts manufacturer by using bank records.

Another time, he checked whether a subject had ever been bonded by one of her employers. It turned out that she had, and he swept up the loose information that had been unavailable from other sources.

Murphy has also found landladies an excellent source of information. "The landladies of these rooming houses often get to know their roomers quite well," he counsels federal investigators.

Alumni reunions can be productive. "At such gatherings," he advises, "a photograph is inevitable, and it might be the means of obtaining an up-to-date photograph for use in your inquiry."

Murphy also recommends checking with the public utilities that serve the subject's neighborhood. "The records of the gas, electric, water, telephone and sewer companies are particularly helpful," he confides.

It is clear from Murphy's handbook that newsmen often come under the federal spyglass. He has found the musty, old accreditation records from World War II and the Korean War are loaded with intimate details about correspondents.

"The files will contain travel data and will include complaints about the (newsman), such as leaving debts behind, excessive drinking or inaccurate

reporting," Murphy says.

Read singly, the federal files may seem merely another dreary example of bureaucratic excess. Examined in larger lots, they provide an intriguing study of just how far the government has intruded into the lives of Americans.

Footnote: Perhaps the only people safe from the government's cradle-to-grave files are those who have managed to dodge every census since 1890. The 1890 census, Murphy relates with a touch of regret, was destroyed in a 1921 fire.

GARBAGE STORY: As part of its campaign to clean up America, the Environmental Protection Agency is trying to convert garbage into fuel. But its two main projects already have cost the taxpayers \$12 million more than the original estimates.

Even more embarrassing, one of the plants is polluting the air in violation of the EPA's own regulations.

These are the findings of Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis., who has complained privately to EPA chief Russell Train about cost overruns at the Baltimore and San Diego plants. The Senator also charged that the Baltimore plant is polluting the atmosphere.

Train conceded that Proxmire is correct both about the costs and the pollution. But he said technological and land problems, not EPA goofs, are to blame. Train hopes to charge the contractors with most of the overrun costs.