

5/23/71 P8  
WPTW Week in Review

## Boy Scouts:

# When Not Helping That Little Old Lady . . .

Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, reverent. And nosey?

The question arose last week when another batch of those documents purportedly stolen from the Media, Pa., office of the F.B.I. came to light. Among the goodies was what appeared to be an F.B.I. manual for training police in "positive programs" of community relations.

Aside from the intriguing philosophy of the manual—a thinking police department does not enter into a police-youth service program with completely altruistic motives. In other words, there has to be some sort of "payoff" to the policing agency"—one of the approved positive programs seemed especially ripe for speculation.

The experimental program was called SAFE (Scout Awareness for Emergency). Those Rochester, N. Y., Boy Scouts who participated were urged to keep a sharp eye out for every kind of antisocial and "suspicious acts" in their neighborhoods—anything from shoplifting to "unusual activity or lack of activity" in homes. SAFE scouts carried wallet-size cards, listing emergency telephone numbers; one was the local F.B.I.'s.

When the documents were released by the clandestine Citizens Commission to Investigate the F.B.I. (the organization which claims to have been the burglars), officials at the na-

tional B.S.A. headquarters in North Brunswick, N.J., immediately pleaded innocent. None of the 4.6-million Boy Scouts, Cubs, and Explorer Scouts in this country, they insisted, are being trained as gumshoes, in Rochester or elsewhere—with the exception of the 8,000 high-school-age Explorer Scouts who think they want to be policemen and are in "law enforcement career - centered programs."

"We're pawns," protested a spokesman for national scout headquarters, "in somebody's effort to smear the F.B.I. The document released to the press does appear to be a directive that Boy Scouts can be used for this [surveillance] purpose. But they never have been."

His explanation: Back in 1969 the Metropolitan Emergency Services, a Rochester agency made up of police, fire, civil defense and other such groups, contacted the Otetiana Council of the scouts to urge some kind of a public service project. A scout show was upcoming, so some flyers and the wallet-size cards were made up and put in a "safety" display at the show.

SAFE, he added, merely wanted scouts to watch their neighbors in a neighborly way. "If

they knew a single lady lived next door and they didn't see any activity for a week, they'd begin to wonder. In fact, this did happen in Rochester a couple of weeks ago, where a Boy Scout did find that a lady had died in her house. And it was only because he had observed that there was no activity around."

In Washington, F.B.I. officials had nothing at all to say, publicly, about the latest revelations in the seemingly endless Xeroxed embarrassments rolling out of Pennsylvania.

Many critics of the F.B.I. found the idea of freelance kiddie cops only too believable. Last year, they pointed out, agents were seated in church business offices—at least, that was the charge of the head of the United Presbyterian Mission Board.

Moreover, there has been a long, and surely for the most part innocent, alliance between the F.B.I. and scouting. Every year J. Edgar Hoover invites the nation's best scouts to come visit him in Washington.

At any rate, nothing seemed more natural than that the Boy Scouts of America were once again in the middle of an ideological controversy. It happens



The New York Times

Was there a message for the F.B.I.? Last week came a report that Boy Scouts in Rochester, N. Y., were being used as informers by the Federal agency. Said Scout officials in denying the charge: "We're pawns in somebody's effort to smear the F.B.I."

fairly regularly, and whether the fuss is over the refusal of a B.S.A. council to confer the Eagle rank on a Rhode Island youth because he claimed to be an atheist; or over the door-to-door distribution of antilabor leaflets as a Boy Scout "project" in Colorado; or a scout leader in Miami who passed out right-wing literature to his boys; or the B.S.A.'s awarding of its highest honor, the Silver Buffalo, to John Birch Society advocate (and former Agriculture Secretary) Ezra Taft Benson; or far-far rightwinger Robert LeFevre's damning the scouts' "Business Merit Badge" for showing what he considered to be signs of liberal softness; or the Russian newspaper Pravda's quoting from Mad Magazine to show that Boy Scouts are "hostile, war-mongering imperialists who are taught germ warfare from the age of eight" — all events which occurred during the past few years — it was clear that in the field of public relations, it has been almost impossible for B.S.A. executives to mind their motto, "Be Prepared."

So when the latest storm broke, about all they could do was yell foul and bow their heads to the buffeting of such critics as Congressman Henry Reuss — whose Swarthmore daughter, other stolen documents disclosed, had been under surveillance by the F.B.I.

Mr. Reuss, back in 1924, was the world's youngest Eagle Scout, winning that rank at the age of 12 years and 9 months, while a member of Troop 10, St. Mark's Church, Milwaukee.

When he read reports of the Rochester gambit, and its approving promotion in the F.B.I. manual, Mr. Reuss was shocked. "That," he said, "sounds more like the Hitler Jugend — Hitler's young spies — than the Boy Scouts I knew."

— ROBERT SHERRILL

*Mr. Sherrill is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C.*