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# Church Says IRS Tax Data Used to 'Harass' U.S. Citizens

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Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) charged yesterday that the federal government has used confidential tax returns as "instruments of harassment" against U.S. citizens.

Church, chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, criticized the use of tax records by federal agencies investigating groups and personalities ranging from the American Library Association and the University of North Carolina to individual members of Congress, reporters, actors and rock singers.

"Tax-return confidentiality has eroded to the point where our federal government has turned these supposedly private documents into instruments of harassment used against citizens for political reasons," Church said in a

statement opening hearings into the operations of the Internal Revenue Service.

IRS Commissioner Donald C. Alexander acknowledged to the Senate committee that the IRS in the past had overstepped its investigative bounds. But, Alexander said, he has worked for more than two years to abolish those abuses.

Church called attention to an IRS branch called the Special Services Staff, which has the task of investigating political activists.

"One wonders how an agency designed to collect revenue got into the business of defining and investigating political protesters," he said. "There were some 8,000 individuals and 3,000 organizations on the SSS list."

He said the list included such organizations as the

American Civil Liberties Union, the American Library Association, the Conservative Book Club, the Ford Foundation, Head Start program, the NAACP and the University of North Carolina.

He asked Alexander how columnist Joseph Alsop, writer Jimmy Breslin, soul singer James Brown, Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling, former Sen. Charles Goodell (R-N.Y.) and the late Sen. Ernest J. Gruening (D-Alaska), and others could appear on this list.

Alexander said he found out about the SSS organization the day after he was sworn into office in May, 1973, but did not learn of its full functions.

"I do share your concern," he told Church. "I have tried and continue to try to do something about it."