

Security Agencies Await Hearings

By
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Federal brass in charge of security matters are nervously awaiting a Senate talk scheduled for this week by Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.), a man who keeps rocking the intelligence community's boat.

Ervin is viewed by some government security types as a single-minded hound dog who unfairly clubs well-meaning bureaucrats over the head with a first-amendment club. His talk will confirm the clock-and-dagger fiefdoms' recurring nightmare, public Senate hearings on what they are up to. The October sessions before his Subcommittee will talk about federal data banks which make people of various political shades nervous.

He's expected to say that a special light ought to be thrown on outfits that keep computer print-outs, punch cards and filing cabinets with information on private citizens who make the news, write for far-out publications or enclose unkind notes along with their income tax forms.

By Ervin's count, so many agencies have so many files on so many people that it would appear all of us—from toddlers to octogenarians—are on file somewhere or other here in Washington.

The October hearings before his Constitutional Rights Subcommittee will ask the question—which some federal officials think is dirty pool—of why such files need to be kept, who sees them and what, if anything, is sacred? They will also want to know who decides which individuals rate a government folder, and who evaluates the information that goes in the electronic doomsday books.

The Subcommittee will probe reports that a nearby military intelligence unit keeps regular tabs on at least some members of Congress and foreign diplomatic personnel. It will also ask:

- About the Army's file on civilians maintained, the Army says, to help it act in possible future civil disturbances.

- What controls are main-

tained on the Civil Service Commission's security file which, Ervin says, has over 2 million index cards relating to suitability for government work, and 10.5 million cards on people who have been investigated for government jobs.

- The Secret Service data bank of individuals who might be a threat to the President or other federal officials. Ervin says this includes the names of "professional gate crashers," people involved in protests, individuals who have written unflattering letters or who "insist upon personally contacting high government officials for the purpose of redress of imaginary grievances . . ."

Other agencies have files, and the Ervin group will try to find out why they are needed. His staff reports that the Department of Justice is setting up a law enforcement

data system to help out local police forces.

The Subcommittee also learned that the National Science Foundation has a data bank of information on scientists; Health, Education and Welfare has one on migrant children "to facilitate the transfer of school records" and Housing and Urban Development, mainly through the Federal Housing Administration, has detailed information on individuals or firms in the housing field that have been mentioned in investigations over the past 15 years.

While the Subcommittee's activities are a pain in the neck to some federal operations, publicity over Ervin's antisnooping crusade has generated thousands of letters from people who believe Uncle Sam is getting too personal with them.

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