



Jack Anderson

Secret Service's Excessive Ways

SOME OF the best police work in the world is done by the Secret Service, which must apprehend a presidential assassin *before* he can commit his crime. Its protective measures, however, are sometimes excessive.

Anyone who writes an in-temperate letter or makes an unflattering remark about the President may find himself under Secret Service surveillance. Its computer files are crammed with the names of 180,000 outspoken citizens.

Most of them are unlikely to shoot off anything more lethal than their mouths. By the Secret Service's own reckoning, no more than 300 of them are really "dangerous." But it keeps a wary eye on them all—on the theory that any of them might slip into the dangerous category.

Such unlikely persons as comedians Tony Randall and Groucho Marx have wound up in the files for making harsh cracks about the President. The less famous, who talk too much, are more likely to receive a grim visit from the Secret Service.

For example, a disabled, 60-year-old man from San Antonio, Philip Moulton, rudely rebuffed a Republican lady who was soliciting votes for President Nixon. "I told her I was against Nixon, he was the last man I'd vote for," Moulton recalled. "I was uncomplimentary, even rude. But I made no threats."

Nevertheless, charged Moulton, Secret Service agents "blustered" into his home and ordered him out of a sick bed. They then proceeded to grill him about his alleged "threat" to the President.

THE SECRET Service has even established a file on its own former legal counsel,

Stephen Spingarn, who has a habit of writing to the President and other officials to offer his advice on national problems. He is a harmless, if loquacious, former White House aide whose advice used to be solicited by both President Truman and the Secret Service. Spingarn also served a term on the Federal Trade Commission.

But since he started furnishing unsolicited advice, the Secret Service has assigned him file No. CO2 39700 06721 and requested its agents in the White House to "forward all correspondence which may have been received . . . from the subject." Spingarn's comment when he advised him that he's now on the Secret Service's suspicious list: "I'm amused."

Indeed, the Secret Service takes startling precautions to spare the President from unsolicited advice. The wife of a newspaper editor, for example, remarked during a Washington visit last April that she liked to discuss current issues with important people. Not long afterward, a Secret Service agent pulled her from a White House receiving line and demanded to know what she planned to say to the President.

When the President travels, the Secret Service checks the names in the computer file to determine whether anyone listed will be in the areas along the presidential itinerary. The more suspicious may be tracked down and locked up, with no regard for their rights, for the duration of the President's visit. Persons who appear irrational, furthermore, can be detained in mental institutions for "observation," which may take weeks.

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