

Post-1968 Students Investigated



By
Mike
Causey

Every person applying for a federal job who attended college since 1968 is given a special security-loyalty check by the Civil Service Commission.

The investigation involves a name check through the extensive files of the House Internal Security Committee. HISC keeps dossiers and data on groups and individuals it considers dangerous or potentially dangerous to the government. CSC makes the name search of recent college attendees because many of them were caught up in antiwar campus activities.

Between 1947 and 1971 every federal job applicants' name was run through the HISC files, or those of its predecessor unit, the House Un-American Activities Committee, to see if there was any association with groups considered subversive.

But CSC dropped the check

of all candidates in 1971, deciding instead to zero in on those persons who had been to college since June, 1968, and individuals applying for jobs at the Grade 12 and above level.

CSC eliminated non-college personnel from the House Committee check because the number of federal job applicants had jumped to over 300,000 and its investigations were being backlogged. Officials decided that the 20,000 or so upper grade and college-level people it now checks each year are types most likely to have their names in the House security files, and the people for which such checks are most important.

The agency revealed the 1971 decision to narrow the scope of the name checks this week in hearings before Chairman Jerome R. Waldie's (D-Calif.) Employee Benefits Subcommittee. Waldie's group is studying legislation (introduced by Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) in the Senate) which backers say would limit government snooping into the private lives of workers.

Waldie, when told that CSC retained the name checks for the 1968 vintage college people, said he was "appalled"

that CSC would zero in on that group. Officials said members of that group would be the "most likely" to be found unsuitable for employment because of illegal campus activities.

CSC officials said, after the hearing that they didn't get a chance to explain in detail the investigation system, which is just one of many pre-employment clearances.

Before most federal workers are hired, or during their probation period, the government checks with local police officials in areas where the potential employee lived, worked or went to school. It also runs on FBI name and fingerprint check, and for veterans it reviews records of their military service and those kept by military intelligence.

The requirement that job candidates be checked through the files of the then House Un-American Activities Committee came about through on Executive Order issued in 1947 by President Harry S. Truman. That order was replaced by another in 1953, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It dropped the House check requirement for all employees, but CSC retained the requirement in its

Federal Personnel Manual until 1971 when backlogs became a problem. Aside from students and top-level job candidates, the only names now run through the House file are those referred to the FBI for "full field" or intensive loyalty checks and individuals whom CSC examiners specifically pick for the checks. He said about 20,000 names will be checked this way this year.

A staffer of the successor committee, the HISC, said the group's data and investigations is mainly limited to liberal or "Communist outfits" because "they are the ones advocating the violent overthrow of the government." Right-wing movements, he said, are more of the "super patriot" mold and do not openly advocate violent revolution.

A CSC official said his agency uses the files only for "leads material" and that finding the name of a prospective employee in those files would not, of itself, disqualify the candidate for a government job. "We aren't concerned with students involved in dissent," he said, "except when that dissent culminates in a 'bombing or throwing bricks through a window.'"