

# The FBI in War, Peace... and TV

By Marvin Kitman

NEW YORK—"The FBI" went into production for its seventh season the other day with Efrem Zimbalist Jr. cracking the case of a military payroll heist. It reminded me of something I've been meaning to tell J. Edgar Hoover: The FBI is growing a little more irrelevant every season on TV.

The bureau has always stated officially that it has no control over "The FBI" series on ABC. In exchange for opening its secret files to Quinn Martin Productions, all the FBI gets is the right to have an agent on the set at all times. I suppose this is to guard against some Communist-liberal extra covertly making an obscene gesture in a crowd scene.

The director of the bureau I've been told also gets to

read every script in advance. I believe he reads the manuscripts for things like spelling errors and punctuation. Other sources claim he's more interested in making sure the FBI always winds up looking great.

On other segments of the show what the real FBI has is sometimes called "final script approval." Come to think of it, the bureau does have a lot of control over "The FBI." For an agency so conscious of its image, it always surprises me that J. Edgar Hoover doesn't use the show as a medium of education as well as propaganda.

The real FBI is changing with the times in the newspaper. The guy who got Dillinger are now trying to get the head of the Social Problems Clubs at the universities. They're involved in dangerous work like taking

instant camera pictures of hippie college students. But on television "The FBI" is still depicting the agency's glorious record in fighting organized crime.

A lot of TV viewers who read the newspapers wonder if the FBI ever catches organized crime, except on TV. Does organized crime even exist, or has it gone underground and reappeared in the guise of disorganized crime?

Wouldn't it have been better idea for the first show of the new "The FBI" season to document the difficulties the bureau faces in dressing up as hippes and getting lost in the scene. In real life the agents aren't very good at it. Their beards tend to be either too long or too short. Their old clothes are too clean or too dirty. They always seem to use out-of-date slang-like last year's word for "smack." They smoke Pall Mall, pretending it's pot. When they recently infiltrated a counterculture neighborhood in Philadelphia, a newsman told me, the little kids ran after them calling, "Look at the FBI men."

This aspect of the FBI's life today might better make a situation comedy. Especially if it was brought out at the end of the program that the hippie consultant the bureau hired from the University of California at Berkeley—turned out to be a double counterculture agent.

The new relevancy of TV's "The FBI" should stress the things the agency is a master at, such as issuing press cards.

Other exciting elements

of the FBI man's job the new show could go into include the way agents get involved in checking on other agents, filling out minute-by-minute record of what they do with their time, the problems involved in shaking hands with the director (they have to be very dry).

A whole show could be based on how somebody rifled the bureau's files in Media, Pa., and how the agency hasn't yet caught the culprit. This kind of thing would make a dramatic script, if it was done well. Then there is the case of the FBI pursuing Father Berri-gan, while he was "in hiding" by running around the country making speeches. It took long to catch him that this continuing story could be the basis of a whole series in itself.

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