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MAIL COVERS 260

WASHINGTON, FEB. 22 (AP)-SEN. EDWARD V. LONG, D-MO., TODAY CHARGED THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT WITH "CONDUCTING 'MAIL COVERS' OR MAIL WATCHES" ON THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS.

HE SAID HE WILL INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO BAN THESE ACTIVITIES WITHOUT A FORMAL WARRANT.

A "MAIL COVER" INVOLVES COLLECTING A RECORD OF ALL INFORMATION ON THE OUTSIDE OF AN ENVELOPE DELIVERED TO A PERSON OR AN ADDRESSEE UNDER INVESTIGATION.

"MAIL COVERS ARE MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT AT THE REQUEST OF ANY LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY," LONG SAID IN A STATEMENT.

AS CHAIRMAN OF A SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE, LONG SAID THAT HE LEARNED THAT POSTAL OFFICIALS WERE CONDUCTING "AROUND 1,000 MAIL COVERS A MONTH" IN 1965.

"THEY ARE STILL WATCHING OUR MAIL," HE SAID, "IN THE LAST YEAR THEY PLACED OVER 1,800 MAIL COVERS. CONGRESS NEVER INTENDED FOR A POST OFFICE TO HAVE THIS KIND OF BIG BROTHER POWER."

"THE BURDEN OF PROOF SHOULD BE ON THE DEPARTMENT TO SHOW THE NEED FOR ANY CONTINUED USE OF 'MAIL COVERS'; TO DATE, THEIR EVIDENCE HAS NOT BEEN VERY CONVINCING.

"THE AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE ALREADY SUBJECT OF FAR TOO MANY SNOOPING PRACTICES. WE ARE WIRE-TAPPED, BUGGED, EAVESDROPPED ON; AND AS IF THAT WERE NOT ENOUGH, THEY INSIST ON SNOOPING IN OUR MAIL. MY BILL WILL ELIMINATE THIS POLICE-STATE PRACTICE."

HE SAID HIS BILL WOULD REQUIRE THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT TO "DROP ITS ROLE AS A POLICEMAN FOR OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND "LIMIT ITS ACTIVITIES TO DELIVERING THE MAIL."

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