

Use of Police 'Red Squad' Data In U.S. Job Inquiries Reported

NYTimes

By JOHN M. CREWDSON
Special to The New York Times

SEP 14 1976

WASHINGTON, Sept. 13—The Civil Service Commission, which has the responsibility for investigating the backgrounds of most applicants for Federal jobs, has routinely relied on the "subversive" intelligence files of local police agencies as source material in such inquiries, according to a House subcommittee.

Representative Bella S. Abzug, Democrat of Manhattan, subcommittee chairman, characterized the files of such local intelligence units, generally known as "red squads," as unreliable, saying that they were filled with "unsupported and often erroneous accusations and hearsay" about citizens' ties to suspected subversive organizations.

In a recent statement, Mrs. Abzug maintained that material from those sources had been retained in Civil Service records and was "checked whenever anyone applies for a Federal job." She added that "the files live on."

Robert J. Drummond Jr., who heads the commission's bureau of personnel investigations, told the Abzug panel in recent testimony that although checks with local law enforcement agencies were no longer a routine practice, they would continue to be carried out "when we think we have a need to."

The commission disclosed last week that it had ordered the deletion of three questions about political loyalty from the form used to apply for most Federal jobs. The questions related to membership in the Communist Party or any other group that advocated the violent overthrow of the Government.

Inquiries Will Be Continued

A commission spokesman said then, however, that his agency would continue to conduct so-called "full field" investigations of applicants for sensitive jobs in the national security area, and Mr. Drummond said today that those inquiries would continue to examine possible subversive affiliations.

"The fact that the question were deleted from the questionnaire does not lessen the commission's responsibility to inquire into and resolve any question of an individual's loyalty," he said.

He confirmed that the local police subversive files criticized by Mrs. Abzug might well be checked in connection with such investigations, though he noted that many big city police departments had discontinued keeping such dossiers.

Mr. Drummond also noted that while orders had gone out to the commission's 105 field examining offices to delete the three loyalty questions, Federal jobs applicants would continue to be advised that should they subsequently be considered for appointment to a sensitive position, "you may be asked to provide such information."

As for Mrs. Abzug's concern about the retention of "red squad" information in the commission's files, Mr. Drummond noted that under the new Federal Privacy Act individuals were entitled to examine a copy of any file maintained

on them by the agency.

He added that the commission also had a responsibility under that law not to maintain a record of an individual's exercise of his First Amendment rights, including the freedoms of speech and assembly, unless that information was relative to his "fitness" for Federal employment.

Mr. Drummond said that if citizens who had seen their commission files raised questions about the retention of such information, or if such prohibited information came to the commission's attention in the course of reviewing a file for other purposes, it would be deleted.

He acknowledged, however, that information about subversive affiliations, which the commission considered an appropriate measure of fitness for employment, would probably not be expunged.