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I.R.S. Leprechauns

The recent information explosion about the misuse of Federal agencies to dampen real or imagined domestic political dissent now includes broad allegations of abuse of the records and powers of the Internal Revenue Service.

Last week's story about I.R.S.'s "Operation Leprechaun" and the use of a female operative—code name, Carmen—is only one of the more sensational in a series of revelations about extracurricular activities of the service. According to Carmen, she was supposed to "pick up all the dirt I could" on judges and politicians in the Miami area. One of Carmen's prime targets was apparently Richard Gerstein, State's Attorney of Dade County, who was conducting a vigorous investigation of Watergate matters at the time.

Earlier this winter, a Senate subcommittee reported that a special unit of the I.R.S. received from the Department of Justice the same computerized list the department had furnished to the C.I.A. At the behest of Justice officials, the special I.R.S. staff was charged with developing information about individuals and groups—ranging from political columnists to Black Panthers to the National Council of Churches. All were treated as possible threats to the security of the United States.

The I.R.S. contact with the American people is broad and intimate. Its proper functioning requires voluntary public cooperation predicated on a faith in the fairness of the way the system operates. The questions raised by Carmen's story, the revelations of the Senate subcommittee and of the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment investigation have shaken that faith.

Restoration of confidence in the fairness of the tax system and in the [illegible] on the [illegible] executive [illegible] special committees, on [illegible]