

Jane Fonda's Fight With the IRS



Jack Anderson

PETITE but pugnacious Jane Fonda has won her share of scratching matches with the armed forces, the FBI and other bastions of government.

The latest to feel her claws is the Internal Revenue Service, which at first revoked and then hastily reinstated a tax exemption for her favorite antiwar charity.

The tax authorities secretly reversed themselves, we have learned, to avoid having to tell Jane how she and her friends were tailed, tapped and spied upon.

The government has developed a strange paranoia about Miss Fonda, whose political ideas are unpopular in the ruling circles. Given the "plumber" mentality of government, the appropriate agencies began keeping her under surveillance.

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FB I AGENTS carefully taped her remarks on coast-to-coast television shows and then stamped the transcripts "Top Secret." They also sat in the audience while she staged her antiwar performances. They grabbed her private bank accounts, without the legal formality of obtaining a subpoena.

To promote her militant views, she joined other antiwar activists in sponsoring the tax-exempt United States Servicemen's Fund, which depended heavily on donors who give only to tax-exempt organizations. The fund put up money to defend dissident GI's, to open pacifist coffee houses and to finance underground military newspapers.

This outraged the IRS, which served

written notice upon the fund that its tax exemption was in jeopardy because it supported GI's "who oppose the Vietnam war and the use of conscription," not to mention "GI newspapers (which) cultivate dissent in the military."

The IRS forthwith began an investigation not only of Jane Fonda but of other show people who had staged benefits for the fund.

Burglars reportedly acting under the aegis of a law enforcement agency also ransacked the fund's files. The stolen documents were accepted by the House Committee on Internal Security.

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ONCE THIS dubious groundwork had been laid, IRS Commissioner Johnnie Walters revoked the fund's tax exemption. Under federal court rules, the fund demanded all records "reflecting wire or electronic surveillance" by the FBI, IRS or other government agencies against Jane Fonda, Dr. Benjamin Spock, retired Brigadier General H. B. Hester and other pacifist sponsors.

The fund also insisted upon access to the "impounded" files of ex-White House aides H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, Charles Colson, former Attorney General John Mitchell and Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans. The purpose was to show that the government had been hounding Fonda and company and that the IRS action, therefore, was purely political.

Faced with the possible exposure of more White House horrors, the administration passed down the word quietly to kill the case.