

Tax Check Ordered on 99 Groups

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The Internal Revenue Service's Special Services Staff, which operated between July, 1969, and August, 1973, to monitor the tax records of political radicals, also investigated such moderate groups as the Urban League, the Americans for Democratic Action and the National Council of Churches, according to confidential IRS documents made public in a Freedom of Information case.

The 41 documents pertaining to the Special Services Staff were released Nov. 8, 13 months after they were first requested under the Freedom of Information Act by the Washington-based Tax Reform Research Group, an affiliate of Ralph Nader's Public Citizen.

Besides listing the 99 organizations which were the initial targets of the SSS, the documents also show that the SSS was created the day after the White House requested that the IRS "move against leftist organizations."

On March 25, 1969, IRS Assistant Commissioner Donald Bacon asked IRS field offices to provide information on 22 radical organizations then under investigation by the Senate Government Operations Committee.

However, the documents reveal that the IRS moved to set up a special task force on "activist organizations" after receiving a telephone call from Tom Charles Huston, the White House aide who prepared the "Huston Plan" proposing extra-legal methods to crack down on political radicals.

According to the Senate Watergate committee's final report, Huston telephoned Roger Barth, special assistant to then IRS Commissioner Randolph Thrower, about July 1, 1969, to request IRS to "move against leftist organizations."

The next day IRS officials formally decided to set up a special task force to collect in-

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formation on dissident groups, the documents reveal. The task force was originally called the "Activist Organizations Committee," but the name was soon changed to the "Special Services Staff" because of "possible criticism and embarrassment to the Service if knowledge of the actions being taken became known to the news media," as one of the documents put it.

On July 14, 1969, Bacon sent a memorandum to all IRS regional offices referring to the earlier Government Operations Committee request, and seeking any information on 55 additional organizations "or other similar type activist groups."

Subsequently, another 22 organizations were added to the list.

In addition to the groups mentioned, this list included the National Welfare Rights Organization, the National Student Association, the Unitarian Society, the Communist Party and the John Birch Society, among others.

The documents do not indicate whether the White House or the IRS supplied the names.

Before it was abolished in August, 1973, by IRS Commissioner Donald Alexander, the Special Service Staff amassed files on about 3,000 groups and some 8,000 individuals.

One undated IRS memorandum declared: "There is ample evidence to indicate tax-exempt money has been diverted into politics, civil disorders, criminal activities involving burglary, arson . . . and the printing of revolutionary publications, all aimed at destroying the economic, administrative, political, and military power of the United States government."

However, the extensive investigations of political groups did not reveal serious tax cheating. According to the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, the entire operation produced only about \$100,000 of additional tax revenues during three years of operation.

Robert C. Brandon, director of the Nader tax group declared that the documents show IRS went "far afield of its mandate to collect taxes and enforce the nation's tax laws." He also faulted IRS for delaying 13 months in releasing the documents, and then only under pressure.

The 1966 Freedom of Information Act empowers individuals to compel government agencies to release information, with certain exceptions such as classified information. An attempt to amend the act, to force agencies to respond faster to freedom of information requests, was vetoed by President Ford but Congress is expected to attempt to override the veto this week.

The documents show that IRS abolished the SSS in December, 1973, but that 22 per cent of its files were preserved, because they involve possible tax evasion or resistance. Officials refused to disclose whether the other files were destroyed.