

TV: F.B.I. Segment on Tonight's 'Great American'

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

Tonight at 9 o'clock, National Educational Television's "The Great American Dream Machine" begins its second season on public television. It's trimmer, running for 60 minutes instead of 90. It's somewhat sleeker, less cluttered with "bridge" graphics between segments. And it's also continuing the N.E.T. tradition of creating waves of consternation in various official circles.

The consternation this time centers on a "Special Report" in which Paul Jacobs, author-journalist, interviews three young men who claim to be former undercover agents—two in Seattle, the other at

the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa—for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The men are identified on camera and they name their alleged contacts within the F.B.I.

The thrust of the report is that all three men committed criminal acts with the full knowledge, and complicity, of the F.B.I. and other law-enforcement agencies. They contend that their mission was to infiltrate New Left groups and to trigger incidents that would give law officials an excuse to move in and "crush" the movements.

The result, Mr. Jacobs concludes, is burning and bombing in the name of the law

and that at least part of the violence blamed on the New Left movement was actually the work of undercover agents working for the police and the F.B.I.

The stories and allegations are not new. They have appeared in the print media, including a detailed article in The New York Times last June about the charges of David Sannes, one of the three men on the television program. But, as many observers have pointed out, there is a great and curious difference between what can appear in print and what can appear on the television screen.

The F.B.I. was told early in September that the "Special Report" was being put together and the agency was asked to supply its side of the story. No official replies were made until this past weekend, when letters began to be received from the named agents denying the charges and from F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover who — according to one source — wrote about the whole matter possibly being referred to the Attorney General John N. Mitchell and the Justice Department.

Meanwhile Hartford Gunn, president of the Public Broadcasting Service, decided last Friday that documentation for the serious charges "simply was not on the screen," and long "editorial conferences" were hastily arranged at the New York offices of N.E.T.

As of late yesterday afternoon, the "Special Report" faced one of two fates: considerable updating or complete withdrawal from the program.

Otherwise, things are just about the same at "The Great American Dream Machine," and it remains one of the liveliest and brightest of television's magazine formats.

With Al Perlmutter as ex-

ecutive producer, the program strings together journalistic essays, cartoons, film profiles, theatrical skits and stand-up comedy routines. Most of the segments are short, geared to the limited attention span most viewers are supposed to have. In one sense, "Dream Machine" is a kind of "Sesame Street" for post-pubescents. Its one marked flaw is some material so fluffy that it very nearly floats off the screen.

This evening, though, the viewer can meet Evel Knievel, the battered daredevil who makes his living by performing stunts on a motorcycle. Evel proudly describes his gift for survival as film clips record a few of his more spectacular exploits, sometimes concluding with the cyclist being rushed to the operating room of some hospital. This Great American Hero's big dream is to jump the Grand Canyon on his motorcycle. Evel, as he would have it, is good.

Then there is the young crop duster in Mississippi. Explaining that the profession traditionally attracts drifters, he soars and hovers over dusty fields in a nold one-seat airplane, spraying the crops and sometimes himself with poisonous insecticides. His dream is to get out of the

'Dream Machine' Causes Stir in Capital

country and set up his own crop-dusting business.

Marshall Efron, the big man daintily wielding a satirical sledgehammer, returns to the program with his impeccably logical tips for the American consumer. In "The

Selling of the American Flag," he examines the big and booming business of commercial patriotism, pointing out that most reproductions of Old Glory may in fact be illegal. One especially fascinating item is a small flag with

a fan in the pedestal to create its own stirring breeze.

So it goes on "The Great American Dream Machine." Nothing seems to be foreign to the program—even the controversy over that "Special Report."