

Nothing Too Sacred For FBI's Sleuths



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WHEN THE FBI's relentless sleuths fix their attention on a culprit, real or imagined, few sources of information are considered too personal or sacred for exploitation.

Neighbors, friends, ex-spouses, building superintendents, college officials, even newspaper reporters are plumbed for tidbits of gossip.

Airline sources freely provide flight details about their passengers. Bank executives turn over their depositors' most sensitive financial records, calculated to the very penny.

The federal government itself is a smorgasbord of information. Data is compiled on the average American citizen from the time of his birth, and the FBI feasts on it.

Military records, Selective Service records, passport, customs, Social Security and even Internal Revenue files, which the hapless citizen thinks are confidential, are actually wide open to the federal cops.

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THE FBI has used these sources to dig out strictly personal information about a variety of public figures who have not committed crimes and aren't ever likely to do so.

For example, the FBI wangled information about black leader Ralph David Abernathy from an intriguing cross section of sources. Abernathy succeeded the martyred Martin Luther King Jr. as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The most frequent references in Aber-

nathy's file are ubiquitous "confidential sources who have furnished reliable information in the past."

This can be anything from wiretaps, to disgruntled ex-employees, to accommodating newsmen.

For information on former world heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, nee Cassius Clay, the FBI turned to his former wife:

"On June 7, 1966, Sonji Clay was interviewed at her residence . . . she advised that from her personal association with Clay, she knows that the NOI (Nation of Islam, the Black Muslims) controls his boxing career . . .

"She advised that Clay would comply with any directive of the NOI in that he is an absolute blind follower of Elijah Muhammad (national leader of the Black Muslims.)"

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WHEN BABY doctor Benjamin Spock was speaking out against nuclear warfare in the mid-1960s, the FBI visited Case Western University in Cleveland, where he was teaching. There they obtained "the personnel file pertaining to Dr. Spock," which was "reviewed on December 23, 1964 . . ."

Such inquiries, of course, serve not only to add bulk to the FBI's files, but also to prejudice a person's employer against him.

Footnote: The most common "sources" in an FBI dossier are ordinary newspapers. The agency's files bulge with clippings, many of them unaccountably classified.