

Merry-Go-Round

**Mr. Nixon and
The Otepka Case**



Drew Pearson

Today's column is by Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

LAST MONTH, for the first time, the Old Nixon of the Joe McCarthy days began wearing through the veneer of the New Nixon.

It began when the President appointed Otto Otepka to a \$36,000 job on the Subversive Activities Control Board. Otepka is the State Department official who, spying on other officials, took classified documents to Senator Tom Dodd of Connecticut and was promptly removed for violating security.

President Nixon followed up his Otepka appointment by naming Otepka's lawyer, Roger Robb, to the second highest court in the land, the United States Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia. This is the court which passes on the largest number of appeals before reaching the Supreme Court.

Robb, a likeable and able attorney, has represented a long list of right wing clients, and generally shares their views.

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IT WAS largely Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois who maneuvered Otepka's appointment to the Subversive Activities Control Board. Last spring, after a long fight by Senator William Proxmire, (Dem-Wis.), attorney General Ramsey Clark had recommended that the board be disbanded. It was costing the taxpayers about \$750,000 a year but hadn't decided a single case for years.

A hangover of the old McCarthy days, it was supposed to pass on subversive organizations. However, Dirksen had appointed a friend, John S. Patterson, to the board. He made a deal with President

Johnson that if Mr. Johnson would continue it, he, Dirksen, would push the confirmation of Abe Fortas as Chief Justice of the United States.

Thus was the Subversive Activities Control Board saved from oblivion. The Otepka case has now dragged on for five years. On Sept. 23, 1963, Otepka, then chief of the Evidence Evaluation Division of the State Department's Office of Security, was charged with violating 13 regulations by giving confidential information to the Senate Internal Security Committee, of which Senator Dodd is the chief sparkplug. On Nov. 5, 1963, Otepka was suspended. Senator Dodd hit the ceiling.

He harangued the State Department with dire warnings regarding the future.

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SUBSEQUENTLY, Secretary Dean Rusk got nervous, backed down part way, permitted Otepka to draw a salary for six years though not allowed to do the work for which he was hired, because he was not trusted regarding confidential papers.

There followed long-drawnout hearings, with Otepka's lawyer, Roger Robb, demanding that the State Department reinstate Otepka to his original job. But the State Department stood firm. Came the election of Richard Nixon, and his new Secretary of State William P. Rogers, who also stood firm.

Whereupon the New Nixon gave way to the Old Nixon, and Otepka was appointed to the Subversive Activities Control Board. With this went an increase in salary from \$14,000 to \$36,000.

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