

The Post Office, at the request of a Federal, State, or local investigative agency, can and does put a "mail cover" on letters sent to a home or office. This means that the return addresses are copied down before the mail is delivered so that somewhere there is a record of who is writing to that person.

In response to an inquiry by our special inquiry, the Chief, U.S. Postal Inspector, Henry B. Montague, reported that 619 such "mail covers" were in effect on a single day. The mail recipients had no idea such a check was being made.

The "mail cover" has never been directly passed upon by the Supreme Court of the United States. Nor is there any statute specifically authorizing such a practice.

I believe the present procedure by the Post Office is shocking and is the type of Government activity which normally would be found in a police state. Congress should pass a law requiring the use of a warrant or court order in such cases. In this manner, the Constitution would be upheld and yet law enforcement authorities would not be deprived of a useful weapon in their fight against crime.

When a person puts a letter in the mailbox he believes that it will be confidential, including the return address. The only purpose of the return address is to make certain that the letter comes back to the original sender if it cannot be delivered. It is there for no other purpose and should be considered a part of a person's personal papers just as much as the contents of the letter itself.

Your Federal tax return is supposed to be confidential, but you're wrong if you think you and your friendly Internal Revenue agent are the only ones who ever look at it.

Every Federal agency and every State as well as several committees of the Congress can ask to examine your return. Sometimes they do.

They are supposed to look at it only in the line of duty and follow a rigid procedure designed to keep the contents confidential. But there have been a number of charges that this confidence has been violated.

There have even been allegations that Federal investigative agencies sometimes snoop through the trash that people leave outside the back door of their homes. It is said that much valuable information can be gained from examining the torn up letters, old bills, canceled checks, medicine bottles, and empty cans which are normally found in trash barrels.

If you think snooping is limited primarily to criminals and possible enemy spies, you're sadly mistaken.

For example, take the latest farm census questionnaire. For the first time, farmers were asked last year to detail their outside income, including the amounts they receive from social security, the Veterans' Administration, dividends and interest and other sources. They also were required to submit this information for everyone living in the farmhouse, including their own families and hired hands. One Pennsylvania farmer wrote me that he considered this to be an invasion of his privacy and information far beyond the needs of the farm census. I agree with him.

Then there is the matter of psychological or personality testing of Government employees and job applicants by Federal agencies. Many Federal workers are subjected to extensive tests on their sex