

Detroit Free Press

Detroit Free Press

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 1975



Chuck Stone

Will Real CIA Agent Please Stand Up?

ONCE THE PANDORA'S BOX of unsubstantiated allegations is pried open, it no longer becomes a question of, "Is there one?" but rather, "Who is the one?"

Alexander Butterfield seems to have rebutted reports that he was the CIA's man in the White House. But is it even logical to assume such a direct contact exists? It is, if you know anything about Washington bureaucratic infighting.

Is one of President Ford's 43 assistants and special assistants in league with the CIA?

A comparatively small but feisty religious organization called the Church of Scientology is convinced one is. The group has turned up evidence it claims persuasively points the finger at special assistant to the president for human resources, Dr. Theodore Marrs, a 56-year-old Alabamian who admits he did do a less than three-months but highly secret stint for the CIA.

SO FAR, FEW officials are taking the Scientologists' charges seriously. A small group (less than three million members worldwide), it suffers from a national prestige and credibility gap, although its adherents include actress Karen Black and former San Francisco 49er quarterback, John Brodie.

In the 20 years of Scientology's brief existence, the church has managed to clash with several federal agencies including the Internal Revenue Service, the Food and Drug Administration, the Labor Department and the CIA over the legitimacy and redemptive claims of its social programs.

The Scientologists finally decided to seek presidential assistance in removing from government files all "false and malicious data" about the church's operations. Their petitioning led them to Marrs. Two meetings between Marrs and church representatives in February and May this year both ended with church members unsatisfied. "I thought we had made progress," drawled Marrs in his Southern baritone.

Subsequent investigations and information from what the church called "highly reliable sources" convinced the church that Marrs was a CIA agent. A strongly-worded letter from the National Council of Scientology Ministers to President Ford on July 11 demanded Marrs' immediate removal.

Marrs is a pediatrician who doesn't deny his brief CIA involvement. "It was less than three months and it was a medical assignment in a tropical country," he told me over the phone last week.

But a CIA agent today? "No, and as far as I know, no one else here is," he said, his voice edged with the weariness of repeated denials.