P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

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PASSPORT FRAUDS

In the sea of red ink which engulfs the Federal Government, there is one agency which ends every year with a healthy budget surplus: the U.S. Passport Office. This so-called annual profit, now in the range of $15 million, is the result of the remarkably efficient operation of the Passport Office and its career Director, Miss Frances Knight. She is living proof that government bureaucracy can occasionally be efficient, and that women can rise on their own merits to executive positions.

Recent testimony before the House Internal Security Subcommittee shows that the State Department is being penny-wise and pound-foolish in refusing to let the Passport Office spend some of its profits to plug the drain out of the taxpayers' pocketbook caused by the rising document fraud in passports, visas, immigration, and Social Security. It is reliably estimated that this fraud costs the American taxpayers up to a billion and a half dollars every year, and the figure keeps rising at an alarming rate.

Passport fraud increased 50 percent in 1973 over 1972. All passport frauds are committed for the purpose of covering up criminal activities. Persons obtaining fraudulent passports are usually drug traffickers, militants, swindlers, illegal aliens, or fugitives from justice such as Oran Mensik who defrauded Chicago depositors in the City Savings Association of $20 million.

Document fraud is perpetrated on a mass scale by a thriving

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underground criminal business called "The Paper Trip." Customers for this business are solicited by a brazen "how to do it" manual telling how to obtain fraudulent birth certificates, passports, diplomas, credit cards, credit records, and other identification. "The Paper Trip" even tells its customers how to alter fingerprints.

Additional legislation is needed which would make it a criminal offense for any organization or individual to apply for or procure any identification pertaining to another person for the purpose of establishing a false identity. The Passport Office should be supported in whatever it needs for prompt and thorough prevention of passport frauds.

The United States is the only country with significant tourist traffic that keeps its passport function down at a fourth echelon. Every year, the Passport Office is mousetrapped by arbitrary budget cuts levied against public service and security operations. Officials of the Passport Office invariably are talking into a bureaucratic vacuum of several echelons of officials who are constantly changing, and who have little or no interest in passport matters.

Basically, the security of the United States should not be a question of dollars and cents. It makes no sense to refuse to allocate the funds and personnel to stop drug traffickers, tax-evaders, and assorted criminals from using fraudulent U.S. passports to take themselves and their wares illegally in and out of the country.

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