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About Mr. Otepka

President Kennedy's comment on the case of Otto Otepka, a minor State Department official, sheds a good deal of light on a situation that far-out conservatives have been attempting to build into a sort of *cause celebre*. Mr. Otepka, the department's chief security evaluator, has been charged with mutilating and declassifying confidential documents and with giving copies of classified material to outsiders.

Mr. Otepka's defenders say the charges were preferred by the department in retaliation for information Mr. Otepka gave the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee in closed session. Mr. Otepka was given until Monday by the department to file an answer to the allegations and meanwhile has been telling his version of the story to reporters.

The puzzling element is that the subcommittee has not called on Mr. Otepka's boss, Secretary of State Rusk, for an accounting. It was announced more than a week ago that the subcommittee vice chairman, Senator Dodd of Connecticut, had talked to Mr. Rusk and that Mr. Rusk had agreed to meet with the subcommittee at a "mutually arranged convenient date."

But Mr. Kennedy disclosed at his news conference Wednesday that Mr. Rusk has been ready to testify since August; indeed, that a subcommittee hearing was scheduled for early September but canceled. Which leads to the conclusion that the subcommittee is in no hurry to publicize the real facts about the case. Which in turn leads to the suspicion that Mr. Otepka is being used by persons who want to discredit the State Department.

If Mr. Otepka is guilty as charged he

should not only be fired, but otherwise punished according to law. If he is not guilty he has ample recourse—to his State Department superiors, the Civil Service Commission and the courts. If Mr. Otepka is guilty he has betrayed the trust reposed in him by the United States; the recipient of the confidential material is irrelevant.