

Olive Elliott



In some quarters, its called paranoia

The telephone rings in a civic employee's office located far from city hall.

Secretary A: Clover Bar Operations: May I help you?

Alderman: This is an alderman, young lady. Let me speak to the manager.

Secretary: Yes, sir! One moment, please. (On intercom: It's an alderman. He wants to talk to you.)

Manager: My God! I didn't think they knew we existed. Put him through. (Clears throat.) Good morning, Mr. Alderman, what can we do for you?

Alderman: They tell me this is where the city administration keeps it hidden.

Manager: They?

A.: Never mind who. I have my sources, you know. People tell me what's going on. I want it — all of it.

M.: It?

A.: Don't play games with me, young man. I'm an

alderman. I have a right to all information. I can have you fired if you don't give it to me. Why, I've had a lot of you people fired already for refusing to provide me with information.

M. (desperately): I'm sorry, sir. I really don't know what you're talking about.

A.: Yes, you do. Why, I know what you've got there. I know that's where the administration keeps all its unsavory material.

M.: You want THAT?

A.: Everything you've got.

M.: We've got an awful lot, but most people don't want anything to do with it.

A.: That's what's wrong with this city. The mayor and the commissioners and all you people think you can hide it all away. You think nobody cares. Well, let me tell you

— I have a reputation for digging into this sort of thing.

M. (in awe): You do?

A.: Of course, I do. You're just wasting time, young man. I'm coming out there and you better have it all waiting for me.

M.: You want to take it away?

A.: Of course, I'll have to have my solicitor examine it. Don't worry, I'll bring a large suitcase.

M. (faintly): A suitcase? Ah, I think there's been a misunderstanding. I mean, this is the —

A.: Let's have no more of this stalling. I want all the dirt. Now.

M. (offended): It's not dirt. It doesn't even smell.

A.: Don't tell me that. I know what's going on. Why, I'll bet there are things there that came from the mayor.

M.: Quite probably, sir. But you can't take it away. I mean, do you know how much we've got? This operation has been going for years.

A.: Are you refusing to give it to me?

M.: I'm not refusing. I mean, if you want a sure we can give you some. I don't know why you. Nobody has ever asked for it before. We thought the farmers might be able to use it, but they don't want it. I guess it just doesn't seem very nice. You know how people are.

A.: Farmers? You're wasting my time. Are you give it to me — all of it — or aren't you?

M.: I can't.

A.: All right. You've just lost your job.

Alderman hangs up. Manager dials telephone.

Secretary B: Commissioner's office. May I help?

Manager: Please, I've got to speak to him.

Secretary: May I tell him what it's about?

Manager: You'll never believe it. This is the the Clover Bar Sludge Storage Lagoon. Solid Branch, you know. I just had the weirdest phone