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The Washi

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Preventing Subversion

The first object of the President's task force on the Central Intelligence Agency's operations ought to be to devise a system that will make the country's non-governmental professional associations secure against secret, covert and conspiratorial subversion by the Government.

Its first purpose ought to be the preservation of the integrity and independence of the private institutions and agencies whose separate existence distinguishes a free from a totalitarian society. No doubt some of these associations, as the result of CIA financing, have, in the past, made a contribution toward the conduct of American policy abroad. But it is a contribution that they cannot make without diminishing, if not destroying, their larger role in the formation of opinion and the ventilation of criticism of government here at home. For government, in a free society, is not a thing apart from the society it serves—it is a product of society. And its views emerge from the clash of opinion and the storm of controversy. To tamper with the spontaneity of that clash and controversy is to pollute the main-springs of policy at the source. The various professions, crafts, trades and academic institutions alone can perform this function. Other agencies can be used, by other means, to further national interests at stake in direct competition with our cold war opponents.

The competition for the control of various international professional groups is a political struggle common to our time. Perhaps we cannot escape it. Our opponents in this struggle have no existence, no policy, no purpose other than that of their governments. They come to this battlefield better financed, better indoctrinated, better coordinated than do our representatives. And so, in the short run, they may win some contests that we would not wish to lose. But few of these battles are of such serious consequence that we can afford to win them by means that imperil the very freedoms we struggle to preserve. And where they are of that importance, and no other alternative is available, open, avowed, admitted and on-the-record governmental support surely would be the best way to accom-

plish our purposes. It is, in any case, the way that does not hazard the survival of our domestic society in order to win a point in the struggle for the control of international groups.

The full dimensions of the CIA operation are not yet known. What is known indicates that the CIA has been used to channel Federal funds into private groups for the good purpose of contending for the control of many international bodies. That has had a catastrophic effect on the credibility of some of these groups. But so far, no one has suggested a worse misuse of Federal funds that such secrecy might make possible in the future. This power and authority raises a specter of corruption that has alarmed every free people since the Walpole government in Great Britain used its secret funds to corrupt the Parliament itself. It is not alleged that this has happened here—but the almost unrestricted discretion of the CIA to spend what and where it will could be perverted. It ought to appall Americans to know that an agency of their Government (for a *good* purpose) has prejudiced the independence of private groups important in their intellectual life. Unless appropriate steps are taken, it may appall them even more, at some future time, to discover that such an agency has prejudiced the integrity of private organizations for a *bad* purpose. Some of the groups already involved have great power in this country. Their favor or opposition, in some cases, is sufficient to determine the death or survival of associated institutions. They could be as useful in fixing the fate of political parties or factions inside the country as they have been useful abroad. And unless the misuse of this kind of concealed subsidy, secret conspiracy and financial corruption is made impossible, this is the kind of rot that will some day appear in this Nation. Now is the time to prevent it by unequivocal, explicit and unmistakable provisions in the law itself that will put these operations under more stringent and more intensive and more continuous review, fixing the responsibility so clearly that no future Congress, no future Administration and no future supervisory board can say that they did not know what was going on.