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Hurt to CIA Harms U.S.

When Rep. F. Edward Hebert likens the current Central Intelligence Agency flap as a disaster akin to the enemy's sinking of a submarine or a flattop, we disagree with him, but only in degree. It's worse.

Cold war or hot, the CIA is indispensable. A spy agency it is; also it is much more.

When the CIA inaugurated its indirect financial aid to student organizations, the major objective was not to spy but to promote American influence abroad—to speak out on international rostrums which too often were only occupied by Communists and their sympathizers.

The CIA can be faulted for the way in which it has handled some of its finances. That, we suppose, is inherent in any organization which is largely unaccountable for its program or expenditures.

Plumbing the opinion of American officials abroad, New York Times correspondents around the world report these officials' fears that revelations of CIA financial support may have blunted some of the most effective intelligence weapons of the United States.

Amazement at the "naive attitude of Americans about propaganda" is expressed by Laszlo Szabo, ex-major of Hungarian intelligence who defected to the U.S. two years ago.

"It is the big front in the secret war," he believes.

As a consequence of the public exposures of this secret organization, work of the CIA has been seriously injured. And, since the CIA is an important instrumentality of the U.S., the nation has been hurt—relatively worse than though one of its submarines or aircraft carriers were sunk by enemy action.