

Insight and Outlook . . . By Joseph Kraft

Reshaping the CIA

IF THE CENTRAL Intelligence Agency hadn't existed, it would have been necessary to invent it.

That is the conclusion emerging after the disclosures of covert CIA support for foreign activities carried on by students and other supposedly private groups. For it has become clear that most of these activities were useful adjuncts of American foreign policy which will now have to be financed in some new way.

The present problem, accordingly, is how to minimize the undoubted loss of effectiveness in overseas operations certain to result from the desire of much of the country to appear moral and of the President to look like Mr. Clean.

In thinking about that problem, it is helpful to bear in mind some remarks recently made by one of the officials who has been closely studying the agency, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, John Gardner.

Gardner said:

"As we look more systematically at the tasks ahead, we are finding that we must free our thinking from time-worn categories. The problems won't stay in the old pigeon holes . . . So we are

learning to follow the problems where they lead."

As applied to the CIA, that statement means that it is no use, notwithstanding the most indignant critics of the agency, in trying to return to the pristine state of innocence where public activities are cleanly demarcated from private activities. The private sector simply will not generate enough funds to support many of the useful activities previously financed by the Agency.

AS TO THE PUBLIC sector, the sad fact is that the Congress would certainly not approve many of the more subtle cultural and intellectual activities which the CIA, because it was operating secretly, could sustain.

The Congress, in fact, would emphasize precisely the crude anti-Communist activities which the CIA, to the dismay of its conservative critics and the befuddlement of its liberal critics, did not sponsor.

It follows, accordingly, that the burden soon to be dropped by the CIA must be taken up by a mixed public-private institution. But it is not enough simply to assert that principle and then cite examples such as the British Council, or in this country, the Smithsonian Institution or Communications Satellite Corporation.

The fact is that many of these joint ventures work poorly, while others do not have public confidence. The important thing is to try to survey the faults of the joint ventures already in existence with a view to insuring that the new institution does work in a way that can insure general consent. In that respect, it seems to me possible to lay down three general guidelines.

For one thing there is the matter of money. The new institution must not be subject to the kind of pressures that come from being dependent upon annual appropriations from the Congress or handouts from any single Government agency.

IT MAKES SENSE that the source of finances be mixed, with some funds coming from Government departments and other from

private institutions. I find particularly interesting the suggestion by Sen. Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota that there be a tax on the foreign activities of American foundations, with revenue earmarked for the new institution.

Secondly, there is the matter of management. While everybody seems to agree on a board nominated by the President and approved by the Congress, it will not do to have the collection of respectable, white-haired fuddy-duddies, with little knowledge of their subject and no time to work it up, that is the model of most presidential commissions. Still less would it be right to have a board dominated by vested interests.

What this suggests to me is a board dominated by private citizens and with a distinct requirement for expertise. It is my impression that in the interests of maintaining expertise, it would be useful to have at least some new members of the board named after approval by existing members of the board.

Lastly, it seems to me that there should be a deliberate margin for experimentation with the new institution. For the basic fact is that we are embarking, here as in so many other places, on a new approach to unfamiliar problems. Fixed ideas are apt to be wrong ideas, and the great need as Secretary Gardner put it is "to follow the problems where they lead."

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