

Internal Security Panel Faces Death

Democrats Vote Termination

By Mary Russell

Washington Post Staff Writer

The caucus of all House Democrats voted yesterday to abolish the Internal Security Committee, which gained notoriety in the 1950s as it searched for Communists and subversives.

The voice-vote decision still requires action by the full House. But a separate vote on preserving the committee first would require a vote to reject the House reforms as a package, an action Democrats say is unlikely.

The committee's jurisdiction—and its files on some 750,000 Americans—would be transferred to the Judiciary Committee.

As a concession to Rep. Richard Ichord (D-Mo.), chairman of Internal Security, staff members he desig-

nates will be transferred to the Judiciary Committee payroll for the next two years, but the liberal-dominated Judiciary Committee is not expected to continue the type of "subversive activities" investigations HISC performed.

HISC survived an attempt to kill it last year as part of a committee reform package by a 246-to-164 vote. But a new death knell sounded in December when the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee simply transferred all its Democratic members except Ichord to other committees and made no new appointments to HISC, despite the fact that freshman Lawrence P. Mc-

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Subversives Were Its Targets

By Haynes Johnson

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The House Un-American Activities Committee, born 37 years ago with a mission to hunt Communists and subversives right here at home, grown into full strength and notoriety after World War II when a young congressman named Nixon first made his mark on it, rechristened in 1969 under a less provocative name, lay near death last night.

In the days of its flamboyant maturity, the committee was a powerful—and feared—force on the American scene. Controversy crackled inside its hearing rooms, banner headlines were spawned by its investigations, reputations were made and lost in the glare of its klieg lights. As its end approached, there were few

mourners, and even few Americans who recognized its name.

An epitaph, of sorts, was pronounced as long ago as last fall. The committee, said Rep. Robert F. Drinan, the Democratic Jesuit priest from Massachusetts, "should

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go the way of all flesh in this era of detente."

Yesterday, after the House Democratic Caucus voted to abolish the committee under its present name of the Internal Security Committee, Father Drinan offered the benediction.

"The votes are just not
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Donald, a John Birch Society member from Georgia, sought a seat. McDonald is a physician and caucus rules say HISC members must all be lawyers.

Rep. James Symington (D-Mo.) said the presence of the 75 freshman Democrats "undoubtedly" had an effect on the vote.

But he added, "We were just formalizing something that had already become a fact. Ichord was really a captain of the ship without a crew."

Caucus chairman Phillip Burton (D-Calif.) called the committee's death an "enormous victory" for the "civil liberties of the American people."

House Democrats for years have been chipping away at the committee—which first made Richard Nixon a household name—with unsuccessful attempts to trim or knock out its \$1 million annual funding.

HISC was established in 1938 as the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and Nixon, who was a member from 1947 to 1950, helped present the testimony of Whittaker Chambers during the famous investigation of Alger Hiss, a

State Department employee charged with passing information to Communists.

On another matter, yesterday's caucus rejected, 85 to 51, a proposal by Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) creating a select committee to investigate charges that the CIA spied on Americans. Instead it accepted a proposal by Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.) to refer the matter to the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.

Harrington said, "The record of the Steering and Policy Committee is such that I'm not discouraged," but no one seemed to know what the committee might recommend. Harrington said he would not be disappointed if it recommended that a House-Senate committee look into the CIA matter. Senate Majority Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) and Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) have suggested such a move.

Harrington complained that the armed services subcommittee which has oversight over the CIA have been a tool of the agency rather than a watchdog. Nedzi is the chairman of an armed services subcommittee which is scheduled to start a CIA hearings next week.

Committee Launched Rep. Nixon

COMMITTEE, From A1

there," he said, to keep it alive.

The Democratic Caucus is the party organization that controls the House. Later this week the House is scheduled to vote on the committee's final fate. It is then expected to administer the final rites, thus closing the book on some of the stormiest chapters in congressional history.

Throughout its lifetime, the House Un-American Activities Committee gave rise to celebrated investigations and intense controversy. Many of those who served on the committee became household words: Richard Nixon and Karl Mundt, Martin Dies and J. Parnell Thomas, Harold Velde and Francis Walter.

Even the committee staff, and its attorneys, became widely known: J. B. Matthews and Robert Stripling, Donald Appell and William Wheeler.

Together, they investigated Communists and Nazis, "fellow travelers" and assorted suspected security risks. Their early targets were such as Earl Browder, who headed the American Communist Party, and Fritz Kuhn, and American Nazi leader of the 1930s.

Later, the committee branched out into wider investigations of alleged subversion. In the 1940s and '50s, when the committee was at the peak of its influence and notoriety, its hearing rooms were filled with dramatic encounters.

The most dramatic of all, and one with which the committee will always be associated in history, came in 1948 in its investigation of Alger Hiss. The Hiss case, and its attendant revelations and sensational disclosures from Whittaker Chambers and his "Pumpkin Papers," propelled young Richard M. Nixon from first-term congressional obscurity into a major political career.

But the committee did not neglect other highly newsworthy targets. It investigated the left of the American labor movement, and took testimony from such as

Joe Curran, Harry Bridges and Mike Quill.

One of its most celebrated inquiries came in 1947 when the committee looked into links between Hollywood screen writers and Communism. Those hearings ended with 10 writers, known in the shorthand of the journalism of the time as "the Hollywood 10," being cheered as they were led off to jail for refusing to testify under oath.

Hollywood and show business continued as a favorite investigative—and headline-catch—device. In the 1950s the committee periodically renewed its show business hearings.

It was before the House Un-American Activities Committee that the actor, John Garfield, apologized for his past associations; that the choreographer, Jerome Robbins, gave the names of some he knew to have allied Communist causes, and that the play-

wright, Arthur Miller, announced publicly that he was going to marry Marilyn Monroe.

On another occasion, the band leader Artie Shaw wept when he came before the committee.

It undoubtedly would be difficult for younger Americans today to appreciate the impact of those earlier Un-American Activities Committee hearings. There was no neutral ground. To liberals, the committee was a profane violation of American rights and liberties. To the far right, the committee was the savior of the Republic, the force that kept the country free of "un-American" influences.

Civil Libertarians were outraged and impassioned at the abuses of constitutional rights they saw being committed. An example of their fears involved the treatment and characterization of Dr. Edward U. Condon, director

of the National Bureau of Standards and a scientist with a worldwide reputation.

In 1948, the committee released a so-called preliminary report calling Condon "one of the weakest links in our atomic security." The report placed a sinister interpretation on Condon's "associations" with East European officials and unnamed Americans "who are members of the Communist Party."

Harry Truman, ever blunt in expressing his opinions, termed the House Un-American Activities Committee "the most un-American thing in America."

Time, and a different national perspective, began to dim the activities of the committee. In the 1960s it attracted attention with Ku Klux Klan hearings in Washington, and it also looked into the antiwar movement as Vietnam flowered in bitter national de-

bate. But in recent years the committee has hardly been more than a footnote to a tumultuous past, an anachronism from the period when the Cold War fears gripped American life.

On its 30th anniversary, in 1968, in a history of the committee, the writer Walter Goodman offered this assessment of its achievements.

"In its first 20 years of life the Un-American Activities Committee produced one law—the Internal Security Act of 1950. As though exhausted by that uncertain accomplishment, in the ensuing 10 years it held not a single hearing on a specific piece of legislation."

There was an irony in the creation of the committee itself.

Although it became known first as the "Dies Committee," after the congressman from Texas who was an aggressive anti-Communist, its real impetus

came from an obscure politician, named Samuel Dickstein. It was Dickstein, a New York Jew, who urged the creation of the committee in the mid-1930s.

He hoped the committee would become a vehicle for investigating the rise of American Nazism.

Now the committee is moribund, leaving behind a stormy, and in terms of today's America, incredible past.

Of all the testimony it has taken, and all the words uttered before it, one passage is worth recalling.

It was in the early Martin Dies days of its infancy. A witness referred to Christopher Marlowe, the Elizabethan playwright. A congressional member of the House Un-American Activities Committee was immediately suspicious.

"You are quoting from this Marlowe," he said. "Is he a Communist?"



Harris and Swine Photo
Alger Hiss, left, faces accuser, right, Whittaker Chambers, before panel on Aug. 25, 1948. At center, committee counsel Robert Stripling.