

6-24-75

Franchising CIA: Hottest Thing

By Art Buchwald

You know the fellow in the TV commercials who sold his friend stock in a company making electric forks? Well, he came to see me the other day with a great idea.

"I want to franchise the CIA," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, with the Rockefeller Commission's report and all the hearings going on, the CIA is the biggest thing since fried chicken. Every government, from the left to the right, needs the CIA, and we can sell franchises all over the world."

"Why would they need a CIA?"

"From now on anyone running for

office will have to claim his opponent is financed by the CIA. If someone dies of old age, his political party can say the CIA killed him. If a crop fails, the head of state can say the CIA poisoned the water. A train wreck, an earthquake, a plague—all can be blamed on the CIA. It gives every government a free rein to do what it wants in the name of fighting a CIA plot."

I couldn't disagree with him.

"Let's say a general who is in charge of a junta wants to knock off three of his colonels for one reason or another. He arrests them for plotting with the CIA to overthrow him. Our franchise provides the evidence, and after the trial it's off with their heads."

"I understand how important it is for everyone to have a CIA to kick around," I said. "What I don't understand is why these countries would want to deal with a franchise. Why can't they just accuse the CIA of all the dastardly deeds without paying for the privilege?"

"Because they need a license. You can't open up a McDonald's or a Kentucky Fried Chicken in a foreign country without obtaining a franchise. The same thing will go for the CIA. Once we register it with the Patent Office, no one will be able to accuse the CIA of anything unless they go through a legitimately franchised CIA shop."

"What will they get besides the

Since Fried Chicken

Capitol Punishment

right to accuse the CIA of plotting against them?"

"We'll provide tape recorders, short-wave radios, poison darts, cigarette cameras, false heels, gun silencers, mail-opening facilities and LSD. The country who buys the franchise will get free advertising, and we will train its employees. But they'll have to keep the premises clean. No one likes a dirty CIA store."

"Kentucky Fried Chicken has Colonel Sanders and McDonald's has Ronald McDonald to represent them. Do you have any charismatic figure whose picture you can put on each franchise wall?" I asked.

"We thought we might sign up

Dick Helms to be our Colonel Sanders, if he would agree to dye his hair white and grow a beard."

"I don't imagine Castro would be interested?" I said.

"No, he doesn't want to work for the company, but he has asked to purchase the first franchise. The CIA has done him a lot of good in Cuba."

"Do you have anything like a McDonald's arch that would be easily recognized by someone driving by?"

"We've been playing around with a few logos. Someone suggested we fly a red wig and false nose from the building. Of course, if Helms took the job we could put his picture

up in lights. But it really isn't that important. The beauty of the CIA is that it's a household word in every country in the world."

"I'll be honest with you," I said.

"When you first suggested investing in your plan, I was going to stash my money in a savings and loan. But now that you've explained it to me, I want part of the action. Besides investing money in the parent company, can I buy a franchise somewhere as well?"

"Sure, we still have a few open. Where do you want one?"

"Portugal?"

"I'm sorry. That one's been spoken for already."

© 1975, Los Angeles Times