

USIA Denies Data To Senate Panel

Post 3/21/72
From News Dispatches

The U.S. Information Agency refused yesterday to give the Senate Foreign Relations Committee documents the agency described as planning papers for programs in various countries.

USIA director Frank Shakespeare invoked executive privilege, holding that internal working papers of an executive agency were the exclusive property of the administration.

Shakespeare testified, "These are unevaluated planning papers. It is not the policy of the agency to make them available. They are internal working papers for use in formulation of policy."

Committee Chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) asked Shakespeare, "If these documents are useful to you in formulating policy, why wouldn't they be useful to the committee? What's so secret about them?"

Shakespeare replied that the reports were not based solely on USIA activities, but also on those of the National Security Council and the State Department. "They could lead to all sorts of misinterpretation," he said.

Fulbright said it was "important" for the committee to determine whether the USIA was a propaganda agency, "an heir to the old cold war," or one that just disseminated neutral information.

Shakespeare answered that the USIA's mission was to tell foreign countries about American society, not to take ideological positions.

Fulbright then read from a USIA memorandum that directed officials of the agency to prepare programs on the 10th anniversary of the Berlin wall expressing the theme that "Communist societies inevitably turn into prisons." The senator said he did not believe President Nixon believed that.

Shakespeare's purpose in testifying before the committee was to justify an administration request for \$200.2 million to run the USIA during the year starting July 1.

The Arkansas Democrat said such broadcasts put out by USIA's Voice of America jeopardize such peace initiatives as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and perpetuate outdated beliefs in monolithic Communism.

Shakespeare said VOA broadcasts are generally objective. "People in the Third World are not going to have an opportunity to go to Berlin to see the wall which is the end product of national policy," Shakespeare said when confronted with the memo.

Fulbright said he wanted evaluations of the mood in other countries and how they feel about the United States and not just access to USIA's broadcasts and publications.

To provide such documents, especially polls taken overseas, Shakespeare said, would risk turning them into "political bombshells" in the United States, especially in an election year.



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

USIA Director Frank Shakespeare, flanked by agency officials Henry Loomis, left, and Ben Posner, testifies.