

Bulletin
3/4/73

Claude Lewis: Like It Is

Citizen Fights to End Secrecy in CIA Spending



For the past five years, William Richardson has been waging a one-man war against the CIA. But until last week, the nation's super-sleuth agency really hadn't noticed.

The United States Supreme Court brought Richardson to the CIA's attention when it gave the Greensburg, Pa., resident the right to bring suit over the secrecy of CIA appropriations and expenditures.

A long time ago, when Richardson was in school, he was taught that the public has a right to know what the government was doing with every tax dollar. Richardson never forgot that lesson and he is attempting, as he puts it, to "bring the CIA under the United States Constitution."

In a recent interview, Richardson explained: "I just felt I was injured by not being able to get the information I was constitutionally entitled to as a citizen of the United States."

"I don't think any agency of the government should have the right to spend public funds without having to account or be accountable for them. The CIA is a clandestine organization. It doesn't give out information to the public about its operational expenditures, so I called on the U.S. Treasury department. I was surprised when the Treasury told me it didn't know exactly what the CIA was spending U.S. funds for. What's more, the Treasury said it didn't even know how much the CIA was spending!"

FOR MOST of the years Richardson has been fighting with government officials, he has not had the benefit of lawyers. However, when he appears before the Supreme Court (probably this summer), he will have a battery of American Civil Liberty lawyers at his side to argue his case.

"It's not that I'm anti-CIA," Richardson said. "It's just that I believe the public has a right to know. Everytime the public is denied information about government activities, we all lose a little more of our freedom. I don't consider myself a troublemaker, but I never anticipated five-and-a-half years of trouble and tension."

If Richardson doesn't see himself as a troublemaker, it's clear that others do. The "trouble and tension" to which he refers may have cost him plenty.

He had been employed for 10 years with a Pennsylvania insurance company. But after he began making persistent inquiries into government activities, he was eased out of his job. Richardson, who resigned as a major in the Air Force Reserve in 1965, was unemployed for 18 months.

"I'm not suggesting that my activities had anything to do with my being fired. But then I'm not suggesting that there wasn't a connection either," he said.

Richardson is not concerned about his physical safety, but his wife and three grown children are.

"It's not important what happens to me," he said. "I have to do what I feel is right. I have a lot of confidence in our government and the courts. My entire family believes in this country. My daughter is going into missionary work in India, my son served in the Marines and I have a younger boy now studying at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. We love America."

Richardson believes that there are several laws and procedures operating in America which are unjust. But, he insists, so long as the public fails to challenge them, they will continue.

RICHARDSON IS a very unusual man. Most of us are taught that we have a say in our government. But once we get out of school we forget the lesson. Our system of government makes the individual feel impotent. We see ourselves as tiny cogs in a giant wheel and begin to believe that politicians are our government, that we have no say at all.

"Oh, we have a great deal of power and authority as individuals," Richardson insists. "What we need more of is the will to get our government straight."

"I have no hostility in me. I have only the desire to keep America free and on the right track, and I'm proud that our system of government still recognizes the individual."

So long as men like Richardson exist, a government of the people will exist for us all.