

SENATORS TO VOTE ON C.I.A. INQUIRY

Democratic Caucus Planning Decision Today on Study of Intelligence Units

12/20/77
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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19—A bitter battle over the Senate's approach to its obligation to oversee foreign and domestic intelligence activities will reach a decisive point tomorrow in the Senate Democratic caucus.

Key Senators and aides acknowledged in telephone interviews today that the 60 members of the caucus will vote strongly in favor of establishing a nine-year bipartisan select committee—similar to that set up after the Watergate break-in—to undertake a two-year study of the nation's intelligence agencies.

The key dispute will come not over the necessity for such a committee, the sources said, but over the question of who will serve on it.

For the last week Senator John C. Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, who has long been the dominant figure in Senate inquiries into defense and national security issues, has been rallying support for his proposal, which is to be considered at the caucus.

Membership Limitation

Mr. Stennis is urging that membership on the bipartisan committee be limited to those Senators now serving on the Senate Armed Services, Appropriations or Foreign Relations Committees. Those committees already have responsibility for dealing with national security issues.

Senator Alan Cranston, Democrat of California, who was said by many sources to have played a key role in liberal Democrats' lobbying for the bipartisan select committee, acknowledged in a telephone conversation that conservative Democrats, led by Mr. Stennis, "have given up" in their efforts to prevent the formation of the bipartisan group.

"Without question," Mr. Cranston said, "we will set up a select committee. The only question is whether we can prevent the caucus from mandating that the members of the select committee must come from committees that already

have jurisdiction over intelligence issues—and haven't kept track."

"I've been unable to count heads on that," the Senator added, "but I have a feeling that we can beat it."

Other Senate sources described the efforts led by Mr. Stennis to be, as one put it, "a last-ditch effort" by the conservatives to maintain some control over the pending inquiry into the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence services.

"They know they can't stop the bipartisan committee," one key aide said, "so they're going to try to emasculate it."

Senate sources said that at least one senior Democrat who normally would be expected to support Mr. Stennis in the caucus—Senator John J. Sparkman of Alabama, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—would not attend tomorrow's meeting. A staff aide to Mr. Sparkman subsequently confirmed that the Senator was planning to leave Washington

tomorrow morning to fulfill a speaking commitment.

Mr. Stennis also was reliably reported to have begun negotiations with Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the minority floor leader, over both the makeup of the proposed committee and plans for Senate action after the caucus voting.

The measure authorizing the bipartisan panel, which was originally submitted by Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the majority leader, and Senator Charles McC. Mathis Jr., Republican of Maryland, will be sent to the Senate floor for passage after its approval by the Democratic caucus, if such approval is voted.

"There may be an effort to change the committee on the floor with the aid of some Republicans," Senator Cranston said. He added that Senator Stennis's work with Mr. Scott "obviously is for future efforts."

Nonetheless, Mr. Cranston said he was convinced that any measure authorized by the Democratic Caucus would be approved without significant modification in the Senate.

In another development, an aide to Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, chairman of the House Armed Services Intelligence Subcommittee, said that hearings into the C.I.A.'s alleged domestic spying—initially sched-

uled to begin tomorrow—had been delayed at least a week by the reorganization now under way in the House.

William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, and Richard Helms, the Ambassador to Iran who served as C.I.A. Director from 1966 until 1973, are scheduled to be the first witnesses.