

Capitol Punishment

By Art Buchwald

It Isn't What It Used to Be

MANY STUDENTS have been interviewed concerning how they felt to discover they were part of a CIA-financed operation, but nobody has bothered to interview anyone from the CIA to ask how he felt to be part of a student organization.



Buchwald

I had the good fortune to speak to a CIA man on a park bench in Lafayette Square. I knew he was a CIA man the minute I saw him because he was counting out 100,000 dollars in cash to give to several students who were picketing the White House to stop the bombing in Vietnam.

One of the bills blew away and when I retrieved it for the agent, he told me to keep it and invited me to sit down.

"It's very discouraging," he said. "Here I thought I had joined a professional outfit, and it turns out that all I'm doing is giving money to students and labor union leaders."

"But that's a big responsibility," I said. "Not everyone can be a James Bond."

"That's all right for you to say," he replied, feeding a squirrel a hundred dollar bill. "But when I joined the CIA, I thought it was just a few of us fighting the evil forces of communism throughout the world. Now

it turns out every Tom, Dick, Harry and even Gloria is working for the CIA. Half the damn country is somehow supported by the organization, and there just doesn't seem to be any distinction in being a secret agent anymore."

"It's true that there are more of you than you thought," I said. "But you have to remember it was your money that made the whole thing possible."

JUST THEN a man came up and said, "I need 75,000 dollars to send a Vassar student tour up the Amazon."

The CIA agent counted out 75,000 dollars and gave it to the man. "May I have an extra five dollars for lunch?" the man asked.

The agent gave him a twenty. "Everyone thinks we're made of money," he said to me after the man left. "But the truth is they're getting very sticky over at headquarters. You have to prove you're a completely independent organization without any possible Government ties, before you can become eligible for CIA funds."

"I guess there aren't many of those left anymore," I said.

"Well, all I can say is that I'm getting out of the organization. It has no status anymore. I was up for promotion the other day, and you know who beat me out for it? One of the editors of the *Harvard Lampoon*."

A MOTORCYCLE roared up and a tough bearded fellow in a leather jacket came over. "We need twenty-five grand to start a chapter in Wilmington, Del."

The CIA man gave him 25,000 dollars.

"Are you behind the Hell's Angels, too?" I asked in amazement.

"Don't ask," the agent replied.

"I don't know how to say this," I said, "but I have a

syndicated column and I'm up to my ears in debt, and I'm sure I could perform some service for you."

"How much do you need?" the agent asked.

"Could I have 10,000 dollars to start with? With that kind of money I could really fight communism."

He reached into his satchel and counted out the cash. "Well, that about cleans me out," he said. "I'll have to go back to Langley and get some more."

"Thanks a million," I said gratefully.

"Don't mention it. We've been trying to put a columnist on the payroll for a long time now. Besides, you have an honest face."

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