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ENTER SMILING—CIA Director Richard Helms, left, is greeted by Senator Fulbright prior to his appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Helms Soothes Irate Senators In 'Salutary' 2-Hour Session

By Bryce Nelson

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Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard M. Helms went before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday and won its forgiveness for writing a Letter to the Editor.

Helms' letter, complimenting the St. Louis Globe-Democrat on an editorial critical of Foreign Relations Chairman J. William Fulbright's attempt to win a role on the Senate's CIA oversight committee, had set off a round of tut-tutting on the Senate floor Thursday. His penance yesterday began with an escalation of Senatorial outrage, a demand by Sen. Wayne Morse (D-Ore.) that Helms resign for having written the letter.

After the closed two-hour session, Fulbright indicated that he saw no reason for Helms to resign.

The confrontation between Helms and the Committee was termed "salutary" by several members, some of whom thought that "new avenues of discussion" had been opened up.

Responsive to Queries

From the accounts of committee members, Helms was much more forthright with the Committee than previous CIA directors. Adm. William F.

Raborn, CIA director until Helms took over a month ago, had refused to answer some questions on the grounds that he was not authorized to give the Committee such information.

Partly in reaction to Raborn's refusal to answer questions, the Committee has attempted to gain a formal role in Senatorial supervision of the CIA this year. The Senate shelved the request, which was cast in the form of a resolution offered by Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy (D-Minn.) by a 61 to 28 vote on July 14.

At yesterday's meeting, the dapper Helms attempted to answer the question posed by each Senator.

One member, Sen. Gale W. McGee (D-Wyo.), said "Helms' candor shut off the water of the McCarthy proposal."

In the meeting, Helms assured Sen. Joseph S. Clark (D-Pa.) that the CIA had not infiltrated the Peace Corps and told Fulbright that, to the best of his knowledge, his agency did not attempt either to influence domestic labor movements or the Fulbright program of international exchange scholarships.

Emerging from the Committee meeting, the reluctant Helms was persuaded to say a few words to the press about

his brief career as a writer of letters to newspaper editors:

"I realize it was a mistake. I regret it and I have apologized."

Only Morse

Helms told the committee that the now-famous letter had been prepared by one of his assistants, and that he had not given it adequate attention before signing it. Helms is known at the CIA for his desire to leave an empty "in-basket" when he leaves every afternoon.

Except for Morse, no Committee member expressed a desire for Helms' resignation after yesterday's committee session.

Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) expressed the committee's confidence:

"None of us is perfect. Hell, we all make mistakes. If we had to resign when we make mistakes, the whole Senate would have to resign."