

Overseeing the CIA ^{Post} 5/16/66

The 12-6 test vote in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee upholding Senator Eugene McCarthy's proposal for a standing committee to oversee our intelligence agencies is encouraging. Senator Lausche's walkout and the consequent lack of a quorum blocked formal approval of the McCarthy resolution. But early final action has been predicted by Chairman Fulbright, and the issue appears likely to go to the Senate floor.

Mr. McCarthy's proposal deserves support as a responsible and carefully circumscribed approach to the sensitive problem of maintaining surveillance over all facets of the intelligence effort. He has given up his earlier idea of conducting an investigation, complete with hearings, into the activities of the CIA. This would have involved troublesome problems, since the disclosures likely to result from such an inquiry could well have been as damaging to our foreign relations as the activities being investigated.

The oversight committee he has now proposed would operate under the constraints of security appropriate to its role. For the first time, it would establish procedures for continuing surveillance as against the present sporadic visitations by subcommittees of the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees. More important, it would place the Foreign Relations Committee on a par with other concerned committees in the supervision process. The new oversight committee would have three members each from Armed Services, Appropriations and Foreign Relations.

The attitude of Senator Russell in rejecting Senator Fulbright's recent request for the participation of Foreign Relations Committee members in the present informal surveillance processes was deplorable. The intimate relationship between overseas intelligence activities and foreign relations is self-evident. Whether or not the Senate accepts the McCarthy proposal for a standing committee, the Foreign Relations Committee should continue to assert what is clearly a proper interest in the intelligence domain.