

The Washi

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Senator Eugene McCarthy has announced that he intends to seek Senate authorization for an investigation of the impact of the CIA on U.S. foreign policy. The mechanism for this would be a new Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the CIA or—should the Senate prefer—a broader Select Committee. This is not the first attempt to bring the CIA under congressional surveillance. At the time of his death, the late Brien McMahon had indicated his intention to work for a Joint Congressional Committee on Central Intelligence as a follow-up to his successful fight to establish the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. Majority Leader Mansfield and his 34 co-sponsors envisaged just such a Joint Committee in their ill-fated 1956 resolution; and Senator McCarthy himself has kept the issue alive since. But the present move is unprecedented in its sharp focus on the importance of the CIA as a factor in the formulation and execution of foreign policy.

There can be little doubt that the institutionalized growth of the intelligence arm of our government during the cold war years has impinged to a very great extent on what has traditionally been the exclusive sphere of the State Department. The CIA's experts in Saigon or Santo Do-

mingo assess many of the same matters that preoccupy Embassy political officers, and its operatives necessarily stir up dark waters that a diplomat might prefer to leave undisturbed. While on paper the CIA answers to the Ambassador in a foreign capital, in case after case the tail has wagged the dog. President Kennedy's Executive Order of May, 1961, reaffirming the authority of the Ambassador, has had relatively little practical meaning.

Senator McCarthy does not enter directly into the controversy over whether, or not the new power of the CIA is a desirable and indeed unavoidable response to a new kind of global political contest. His concern appears to be primarily that this power be made subject to Congressional restraints—and that the committees of Congress dealing with foreign policy have a central place in overseeing the CIA.

The establishment of the proposed Subcommittee would be a desirable first step indicating a recognition by Congress that the Foreign Relations Committee has a proper interest in the affairs of the CIA. Both the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees have long had Subcommittees on the CIA, and these bodies now hold informal joint meetings with CIA officials at irregular intervals in which the Foreign Relations Committee should be given a voice. Beyond this, the work of the new Subcommittee in examining the record of the CIA could be a valuable guide for future congressional action, though it should be self-evident that this examination would have to be conducted under ground rules not normally acceptable to Congress.