

William Corson: Keeping His Eyes on Spies

A new book due out this month will heat up the national debate on the proper role of America's spy establishment. It claims, among other things, that:

- The CIA covered up the murder of a U. S. citizen on its payroll who was involved in international narcotics traffic.

- Richard Nixon knew long before the Huston Plan was devised that the government engaged in mail intercepts, break-ins, illegal surveillance, he was briefed on those and other dirty tricks in the Fifties when Eisenhower had heart problems and Nixon acted as President.

- Assets of the Northwest Federal Credit Union, which serves CIA employees, have increased sharply (from \$40

million to \$100 million) since the Agency has come under scrutiny in the last several years. Not only is the credit union's interest rate for savings accounts higher than comparable institutions (seven per cent versus six and a quarter elsewhere), but its rate of delinquent loans is twice the national average. This might indicate the "laundering" of Agency funds.

These assertions are made by intelligence specialist William Corson, who drew from thousands of pages of documents he requested under the Freedom of Information Act to write his profile of the American intelligence community called *The Armies of Ignorance* (Dial Press).

Corson, 52, is a retired

Marine Corps officer with experience serving on numerous Cold War intelligence boards, primarily concerned with Asia. He is currently *Penthouse* magazine's national affairs editor in Washington, and he informally assisted Sen. Frank Church's intelligence committee.

"One of my cliché questions is 'Name a spy.' Somebody says 'Nathan Hale' and I say 'Name me a second spy' and they can't," Corson says. "They are obscure people in history, and I wanted to write about the personalities of the players as well as about the institutional evolution of American intelligence."

Corson's "armies of ignorance" are the various intelligence agencies that he main-

tains have been operating too long without clear directions from the White House or a precise statute from Congress, a situation he thinks leads to blunders. He is squarely in the camp of those who advocate a centralized intelligence operation. "The Church committee didn't finish the job," he says, "and the coming year may be the last chance to rationally achieve a structural reform of the intelligence community."

Footnote: Corson pinpoints the White House and Capitol Hill as the two most vulnerable spots for infiltration by foreign agents, and he offers the Korean lobbying effort on Capitol Hill as proof. "We trained them," Corson says, "and they used the tactics against us."