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Panel Leaves Questions on CIA Unanswered

"It's a hell of a way to learn things," President Kennedy said immediately after the Bay of Pigs, "but I have learned one thing from this business—that is, that we will have to deal with the CIA."

Kennedy may have learned this but there is nothing in the report on the CIA that Lyndon Johnson has just uncritically accepted from his own three-man investigation panel that suggests the President has learned the same lesson as his predecessor.

When the President appointed Under Secretary of State Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, HEW Secretary John Gardner and CIA Director Richard Helms to review CIA activities in the light of its million-dollar secret subsidies to U.S. students and others, he limited the scope of the inquiry. The panel seems to have limited it even further.

By instantly launching his own inquiry, the President succeeded in heading off much broader investigations proposed in the Senate and

House. Now, of course, with the CIA out of the headlines, the whole matter will be laid quietly to rest with the innocuous findings and recommendations of the Johnson panel.

The panel recommends that the secret subsidies should be terminated (as they would have been anyway) and vaguely suggests that perhaps ways can be found openly to finance similar future activities. The net effect is to say that everything the CIA has done is blameless, but nevertheless should never be allowed to happen again.

Leaving ethics and the good name of the United States aside, what did we ever get for all these millions? The panel is silent. Can anyone seriously believe that sending a handful of students (some of them critical of the United States) to international meetings abroad saved the day for the free world in the cold war struggle?

Scores of new nations have emerged in the last decade or so, but not one has gone

Communist. There are 125 countries in the United Nations, but in the same period of time none has been taken over by outside Communist aggression, subversion, or even persuasion. The notion that a small platoon of U.S. students has been a serious factor in this mass disaffection is hardly worthy of discussion.

In canvassing other means of promoting student appearances abroad, the panel says:

"It is of the greatest importance to our future and to the future of free institutions everywhere that other nations, especially their young people, know and understand American viewpoints. There is no better way to meet this need than through the activity of private American organizations."

The panel should think again. The best way for "other nations to know and understand" our country is not through what the CIA or the USIA or the Voice of America say, but through what the

American government and American people do. The rest of the world is impressed not by what we preach, but what we practice. And of course that's the way we ourselves judge others.

The panel also had no comment on the reason most often advanced to excuse the CIA or its secrecy in spending so much on these activities. Many of CIA's best friends argued that it had to act covertly because back in the 1950s, when the subsidies began, Congress would never have approved such expenditures of public funds.

As matters stand, there is small chance of stricter CIA supervision until another melodrama again arouses public indignation, for the President's heart is with the small group of Senate-House hawks that has successfully resisted every effort to bring the CIA under the kind of control that all other government agencies are properly subjected to.