

Review Panel Will Take Up FBI Ex-Agent's Manuscript

Part of 78177
The government's arbiter of official secrets, the Interagency Classification Review Committee, voted overwhelmingly yesterday to take up the attempted suppression of a "Top Secret" manuscript written by a former FBI agent.

The committee's acting chairman, James B. Rhoads, the archivist of the United States, said in a brief telephone interview that the only dissenting vote came from the representative from the Department of Defense, which "did have some misgivings."

The manuscript in question is the tentative first chapter of a book on counterespionage cases by Robert J. Lamphere, an FBI unit chief from 1947 to 1955. The draft involves the interception of secret Russian intelligence communications, reportedly concerning Ethel and Julius Rosenberg who were executed in 1953 after their conviction for passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union.

A Justice Department review committee voted 4 to 1 in August to clear the manuscript, which Lamphere had submitted voluntarily. But the code-breaking National Security Agency, a semi-autonomous branch of the Defense Department, objected so strenuously that the issue was sent up to the ICRC.

Rhoads said he hoped the issue could be settled on its merits at next month's meeting, tentatively scheduled for Nov. 30. "A number of us did feel that this was the only clean way of approaching it and not leaving a number of government agencies and Mr. Lamphere in an impossible position," the archivist said.

The ICRC has eight members, but Rhoads, as acting chairman, votes only in event of a tie. ICRC executive director Robert Wells said yesterday's vote to settle the dispute on its merits was 6 to 1.