

Security and SACB Die

Agency, Bereft of Funds, Folds

7/1/73

By Ted Frederickson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Subversive Activities Control Board, attacked in recent years as a cold-war anachronism and stripped of its functions by Congress last year, passed out of existence last midnight.

Ironically, the liquidation of the agency comes under Richard Nixon, who as a young California congressman initiated the bill that set up SACB to expose Soviet undercover organizations but who as president publicly embraced Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev last week in continuing search for global detente.

The President chose not to request funds for SACB

for the 1974 fiscal year, which started today, after Congress rejected his 1971 attempt to assign the agency new powers to update the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations and investigate violence-prone domestic groups.

The board was created in 1950 by the Subversive Activities Control Act, which was introduced by then Representative Nixon and former Sen. Karl Mundt (R-S.D.) and came into being over President Truman's veto. The bill authorized SACB to expose Soviet-spon-

See SACB, A22, Col. 1

SACB Goes Out of Existence; Was Sponsored by Rep. Nixon

SACB, From A1

sored organizations whose goal was to overthrow the government—a task the agency performed by requiring individual members of Communist organizations to register with the government.

A series of court decisions held, however, that individual registration violated constitutional rights against self-incrimination, and SACB after 1967 accomplished little though its five members continued to collect annual salaries of \$36,000.

Although Congress passed an appropriation of \$360,000 for fiscal 1973, an amendment offered by Sen. Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) prohibited the agency from using the funds to carry out the new duties outlined in Mr. Nixon's executive order. The agency was left with an operating budget but little to do.

In one incident in its stormy history, President Nixon appointed Otto Otepka to the SACB at the same time Otepka was fighting his suspension from a State Department security post for giving classified information to the House Internal Security Committee.

Otepka, who collected his State Department salary for five years while he appealed his firing, was confirmed by

the Senate after a floor battle, but resigned from SACB last year.

Yesterday afternoon, Francis J. McNamara, SACB executive secretary, was the last man on the job. As he cleaned out his cluttered desk at SACB's modern 10-room suite of offices at 2120 L Street N.W., McNamara talked about the continuing need for an agency like SACB.

"A key element of any personnel security program is whether the applicant is affiliated with a subversive group," said McNamara. "Someone has to determine what groups are subversive and provide a guide to follow."

"I'm not bitter," said McNamara, "I'm dissatisfied." He said it "bugs" him when "people come in here with smug looks on their faces and suggest that anyone who still thinks the Soviet Union is trying to take over the world is a stupid ass. I'm amazed that people actually believe the Soviet Union no longer wants to bury us."

John W. Mahan, who resigned last week as chairman of SACB, said he thought "the board did a good job over the years. There were 50,000 card-carrying Communists when the act was enacted," he said, "and that number went down to about 6,000 in 1961. Now that we're out of business, it's on the rise again."

"I think the board did what it intended to do," said Mahan, "and by disclosures alone. Nobody went to jail. I think that Congress should have hearings to decide whether a disclosure-type committee like this is still needed. Personally, I've always believed in a personnel security program."

Paul J. O'Neill is technically the last remaining board member. John S. Patterson recently retired; Simon F. McHugh Jr. resigned six months ago; Mahan last week, and Otepka last year.

"I'm sorry to see it end," said O'Neill, "but as long as we couldn't function and do the job, there was no reason to spend the taxpayer's money."

O'Neill said he believes

"there still are dangerous organizations and Communist-front groups operating in this country. We just identified two more recently and I'm sure there are others," he said.

"Just because you're talking to Communist countries like China and Russia," he continued, "doesn't mean you let down on your defenses. I'd rather be safe than sorry."

Asked how any of these organizations could threaten an overthrow of the government, O'Neill posed this hypothetical situation:

"Suppose back in 1970, when violent demonstrations were being formed around the country, they had all happened at the same time and the same place. Would we have had enough National Guardsmen and soldiers to stop them? I don't know. But it's possible they could have taken over a portion of the country."

Just knowing who these organizations are, explained O'Neill, "is important."

The committee operated by holding hearings, and taking testimony from witnesses. The only sanction it could impose was exposure—publicity that the board had found an organization to be a "Communist front."

Its last two findings, issued early this year, found the Young Workers Liberation League and the Center for Marxist Education to be Communist fronts.

Some still see a need for SACB. Sen. Roman Hruska (R-Neb.), said at the time SACB's budget was being considered in the Senate last year: "Personally, this senator will try to see to it that some mechanism, some agency, will be charged with this particular effort which is based upon personnel security . . . The executive order, if it were implemented, would change the name of the board . . . and assign to it different duties and responsibilities . . ."

Responded Sen. Ervin: "I say to my good friend, the senator from Nebraska, that it is said a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but a crushed gentian weed by any other name would smell just as bad."