

Harrington Sees Bid To Stifle CIA Probe

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Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) charged yesterday that he has been made the target of a "brazen attempt" to squelch the House investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Under fire for his disclosures last year about covert CIA operations in Chile, Harrington held a press conference to protest what he described as the heart of the problem: congressional insistence on secrecy even in the face of illegal activities.

"We have all, to some degree, become accomplices in allowing such policies to continue because of the silence to which we are pledged," Harrington said. "The only way to avoid this dilemma is to challenge the basic assumptions of a classification system gone wild."

A member of the select House intelligence committee set up to investigate the CIA, Harrington said he had no intention of resigning from the panel—which some critics have suggested is the price that must be paid before the inquiry can go forward.

Instead, he called on House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) to help resolve the question of what a lawmaker should do with evidence—even when stamped "top secret"—that his government has engaged in wrongdoing.

Putting the question directly to Albert in a letter requesting a ruling from the House Democratic Policy and Steering Committee, Harrington asked: "What is the responsibility of a member who

discovers in classified records a clear indication that his government has broken the law?"

The Massachusetts Democrat was chastised last month by the House Armed Services Committee for violating a written pledge of secrecy and leaking classified information about CIA operations directed against the late president of Chile, Salvador Allende.

Harrington noted that the action coincided precisely with the debate over the continuation of Rep. Lucien N. Nedzi (D-Mich.), as chairman of the House intelligence committee. The committee's Democratic majority, including Harrington, had contended that Nedzi's record as a CIA overseer in the past made it impossible for him to conduct an effective inquiry.

The CIA disclosed many of its improper or illegal activities to Nedzi more than two years ago as chairman of the standing House Armed Services subcommittee in charge of CIA oversight. But he took no action, in light of CIA Director William E. Colby's assurances that corrective steps were being taken.

Harrington said that last month's attack on him effectively shifted the controversy "from Lucien Nedzi's shortcomings as an overseer of intelligence operations to Michael Harrington's alleged recklessness in handling official secrets—all on the very day that Mr. Nedzi's resignation as select committee chairman was taken up by the House."

"It does not take a conspiratorial mind," Harrington said of the Armed Services Committee reprimand, "to see it as

part of a brazen attempt to subvert the select committee investigation."

The House voted overwhelmingly on June 18 to reject Nedzi's resignation, setting the stage for efforts to abolish the select committee and perhaps start again with a fresh panel. Nedzi has called no meetings since the House vote and has frozen committee staff hiring.

Efforts by Albert and other House Democratic leaders to patch up the rift have so far been fruitless. Partly as a result, the House Rules Committee had scheduled a meeting today to consider a resolution to abolish the committee. Speaker Albert indicated yesterday, however, that he would ask the Rules Committee to hold off for further attempts to reach a compromise.