

Drive Pressed

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

Senate intelligence committee Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) charged yesterday that appointment of former Republican National Chairman George Bush as director of the Central Intelligence Agency would seriously undercut all the efforts to reform it.

Sounding the start of a determined Senate campaign to defeat the nomination, Church denounced President Ford's choice of Bush as "astonishing," especially in light of attempts that have come to light as a result of the Watergate scandal to use the CIA for political purposes.

"The Senate and the people we represent have the right to insist upon a Central Intelligence Agency which is politically neutral and totally professional," Church declared in a floor speech. He said he could not envision "so partisan a man" as Bush standing up to the President in an election year and counseling against some politically opportune but ill-advised action.

"How would it have looked if a Democratic President had nominated (former Democratic national chairman) Larry O'Brien?" as CIA director, Church asked. "There would have been an uproar."

Church told reporters before delivering the speech that he didn't know whether there was much chance of blocking Senate confirmation of Bush's appointment, but he said, "I'm going to do my best."

The nomination will be considered by the Senate Armed Services Committee, where Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) has indicated he also may oppose Bush.

Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.), who is Senate Republican policy chairman and the vicechairman of the Church Committee, said the opposition to Bush was "fairly vocal" but not widespread as far as he could see, at least now. He told reporters he saw nothing wrong with Bush's credentials.