

Senate Rift Looms Over Power of Intelligence Panel

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 28—

The Senate Rules Committee voted today to give no law-making or budgetary authority to a proposed new Senate committee that would monitor the activities of intelligence agencies.

The action set the stage for a floor fight next month between members of the Senate's old guard, who approve of today's action, and younger, more reform-minded senators, who want to keep tighter reins on the nation's intelligence apparatus.

A central finding of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities in its reports this week was that Congress had exercised far too little control over the intelligence agencies.

The select committee, headed by Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, recommended the creation of a new Senate committee with broad power to regulate the work and expenditures of the intelligence community.

Clark Favors a Panel

Senator Dick Clark, an Iowa Democrat, argued in the rules committee today that failure of the Senate to establish such a panel would "in effect be to repudiate the Church committee."

The rules committee, however, voted, 5 to 4, to set up a new Senate committee with power to do little more than study and investigate intelligence matters, which is essentially what the Church commit-

tee did for 15 months before making its final recommendations.

Under the rules committee's proposal, the members of the new committee would be drawn from the four committees whose past direction of intelligence activities the Church committee found lacking. The members of the new committee would be appointed by the chairmen and ranking minority-party members of those four committees.

The four committees are Appropriations, Armed Services, Foreign Relations and Judiciary. The respective chairmen—John L. McClellan of Arkansas, John C. Stennis of Mississippi, John J. Sparkman of Alabama and James O. Eastland of Mississippi—are among the oldest and most conservative Democrats in the Senate.

Voted for Strong Panel

In February, the Senate Government Operations Committee voted unanimously to create a strong new intelligence oversight committee like that proposed by the Church committee.

The effort in the rules committee to overturn the work of the Government operations panel and strip all important powers from the new committee was led by Senators Howard W. Cannon of Nevada and Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, both of whom have close ties to the Democratic establishment that has run the Senate for much of the last three decades.

Senator Cannon argued today

that a strong oversight committee "might seriously jeopardize the conduct of our intelligence activities." The basic question, he said, is whether "it is the solution to the problem to cut off the dog's head if he has a disease that can be cured with a lesser remedy."

Enormous Implications

The matter is likely to reach the Senate floor about May 10. Many senators and staff members said today that the decisions made then would carry enormous implications about the conduct of the intelligence community for years to come.

In terms of internal Senate politics, they said, the votes in the Senate next month will provide the first indication of whether leadership in the Senate is likely to pass to a new generation, more in tune with the national Democratic Party than the leaders of the past.

In a broader context, they added, the decisions will show whether the Senate seriously intends to become deeply involved in setting foreign policy or whether it is satisfied with leaving such matters primarily to the President.

Although the division is not a neat one, the struggle is basically between the half of the Senate elected in the last 10 years and the half elected before 1966.

The more senior Senators have attained committee chairmanships and other positions of authority. They are reluctant to strip power from one of their

number—Senator Stennis or Senator McClellan, for instance—for fear that the next time it will be they who are the losers.

The young Senators, equally ambitious, are eager to see an institutional framework that gives them more influence in the conduct of government.

The votes on intelligence oversight, in the view of some, may also have repercussions on the race for the Senate majority leadership next year between Mike Byrd and Edmund S. Muskie, Democrat of Maine.

Senator Byrd's strength is with the old guard, the Senators whose jurisdictional authority he is currently defending. Senator Muskie is the candidate of many of the younger members.

Staff members of Senators who want a strong oversight committee have been meeting for some days to plan strategy for the floor fight. Based on a preliminary nose count, one such staff member said today that a majority of Senators favored his sides general position but that he expected to lose on some specific issues.

As is so often the case in the Senate, many of the decisions next month may hinge on parliamentary maneuvering, and Senator Byrd and his allies are masters at that.

The decisions of the Senate will be final, because all that is involved is the formation of a new Senate committee. Neither the House of Representatives nor the executive branch will have any say in the matter.