

CIA
14 May 1966

May 14, 1966
Caliber of C.I.A. Staff

To the Editor:

While your series on the C.I.A. quite properly notes that it is men, and not the forms of control, which are critical, it failed in one very important sense to follow up the point of that observation. For it is not only the men at the top who count, but perhaps even more importantly, the men in the field.

What worries a good many people is the likelihood that C.I.A. personnel practices, geared to a narrow view of national security needs, tend to produce a staff representing a very limited and partisan range of the political spectrum. To the extent that this is the case, the danger of excessive zeal is not nearly so much the result of combining intelligence and operations as it is the product of creating an agency which has a built-in political point of view.

The virtues of detachment and objectivity are no less important for an intelligence agency than they are for a court, and in this regard the admonition of Justice Holmes seems remarkably timely: "One has to remember that when one's interest is keenly excited evidence gathers from all sides around the magnetic point." This danger, Justice Frankfurter wisely noted, "should be particularly heeded at times of agitation and anxiety, when fear and suspicion impregnate the air we breathe."

The fact that there may be liberal analysts in Virginia does not assuage the concern of those who wonder about the kind of men who are planning and carrying out the "dirty tricks." An article dealing with personnel hiring practices might very well be more significant than further rehashing of adventures which had already largely become matters of public knowledge.

JOSEPH L. SAX

Associate Professor of Law
University of California
Berkeley, April 29, 1966