

Mr. Otepka's 'Vindication'

President Nixon can claim he has fulfilled at least one campaign pledge and presumably Senator Dirksen will sleep better. The Senate has confirmed Otto F. Otepka—living symbol of some of the worst days of the McCarthy-McCarran era—to a \$36,000-a-year job on the superfluous Subversive Activities Control Board.

It was hardly the Senate's finest hour but a desultory debate at least brought out a few essentials. Senator Young of Ohio called Mr. Otepka's appointment "an outlandish piece of political expediency." Senator Nelson of Wisconsin pointed out that at its present pace in ruling on suspected Communist fronts, the S.A.C.B. was costing the country \$100,000 a case. And Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts recalled that the Civil Service Commission had upheld Secretary of State Rusk's demotion of Mr. Otepka for handing

raw security files to a Senate committee without permission; and that Mr. Nixon's own Secretary of State had refused to reinstate Mr. Otepka this year. The Senate also knew that only a cynical deal between Mr. Dirksen and President Johnson had saved the S.A.C.B. from extinction in 1967.

But Senator Dirksen has accomplished his major goal for the 91st Congress and the question now is whether Senator Thurmond of South Carolina will achieve his larger ambition for Mr. Otepka. A pending bill would erect a whole new security superstructure over the Federal Government. An unusual provision specifies that the administrator of the new agency could also be chairman of the S.A.C.B. Mr. Thurmond has Mr. Otepka in mind for this larger and more dangerous responsibility. Civil libertarians will await Mr. Nixon's opinion with interest.