

Opposition Likely Over Head of House C.I.A. Inquiry

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 5 — House Democrats may face an internal struggle over the chairmanship of a new committee that will investigate the conduct of Government intelligence agencies.

House Speaker Carl Albert, Democrat of Oklahoma, reportedly has tentatively decided to name Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, to head the 10-member bipartisan select committee.

But House critics of the intelligence community are considering a move to try to block the appointment on the ground that Mr. Nedzi is too closely identified with Congressional panels that have been unable to provide close supervision of the Central Intelligence Agency. Since 1971, Mr. Nedzi has been chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Intelligence.

Mr. Nedzi said in an interview today that he did not know whether he would be appointed to direct the House inquiry into clandestine operations of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the C.I.A. and more than a dozen other intelligence agencies.

But he defended his subcommittee and said that any opposition to his selection must be "based on the assumption that someone who knows something about the problem shouldn't be involved in trying to solve it."

As yet, there is no formal opposition to Mr. Nedzi, but liberal members of the House said they were urging Representative Michael J. Harrington, a Massachusetts Democrat who is an outspoken critic of the C.I.A., to oppose the appointment.

Mr. Harrington said late today that he had no current plan to "impede the right of the Speaker" to select the chairman. But he repeated an earlier statement urging Mr. Albert to "avoid the obvious pitfalls of choosing someone closely identified with past oversight of intelligence agencies."

Mr. Albert said this morning that he would delay the appointment of the seven Democrats on the select committee until the House formally created the panel later this month. The Speaker added that he had a chairman "in mind" but declined to say who it would be.

Senior Democrats in the House said privately that Mr.

Albert decided yesterday to name Mr. Nedzi as chairman.

One House source said Mr. Nedzi would be a suitable chairman if the committee's other Democrats included "five Harringtons"—that is, either critics of intelligence agencies or members not associated with past House supervision of the agencies.

Asked about the opposition, Mr. Nedzi said he had "respect for the judgment of those who feel a fresh outlook is desirable." But he added that a "good committee" should include both those who have had past experience in intelligence matters and those with a new viewpoint.

The sensitivity to Mr. Nedzi's prospective chairmanship was reported to be based in part on the record of the Intelligence Subcommittee in closed hearings on the conduct of the C.I.A. in the Watergate affair.

Senate Friction, Too

The New York Times said last Sunday according to previously unpublished testimony, Richard Helms, while Director of Central Intelligence, ordered a subordinate to withhold Watergate information and deny Justice Department access to a key witness in the first six weeks after the Watergate break-in on June 17, 1972. The subcommittee's Oct. 23, 1973, report on the hearings did not cite Mr. Helms's personal role in withholding the information and Mr. Nedzi did not call attention to the testimony when he declassified it late last year.

The controversy over the leadership of the House inquiry reflected the friction that preceded the creation last week of a Senate select committee on intelligence operations. The Senate majority leader, Mike

Mansfield of Montana, bypassed the chairman of intelligence oversight panels and chose Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, to head the new committee. Senator Church has been sharply critical of some C.I.A. activities.

The 11-member Senate committee will hold its first meeting tomorrow. Mr. Church is expected to name William G. Miller, a Republican with wide experience in foreign affairs, as staff director of the panel.

An aide to Mr. Church said the Senator would try to keep the staff "lean"—with perhaps only 30 investigators and clerks in all—despite the breadth of the inquiry. At their peaks, the Senate and House panels that investigated the Watergate scandals had more than 100 staff members each.

House Hearings Set

A subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee will begin hearings tomorrow on several measures that would forbid Government agencies' to conduct surveillance on American citizens for intelligence purposes.

In a related development today, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, introduced legislation that would require the Justice Department, including the F.B.I., to come before the committee each year to justify its budget request.

"Events of recent years dramatically demonstrate the need for closer Congressional scrutiny of the operation and activities of the Department of Justice," Mr. Rodino said.

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