

House Intelligence Inquiry Chief

Lucien N. Nedzi

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 — There was no mistaking the wryness of the grin wrinkling the face of Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr. as he extended his right hand

and said, "Congratulations," to Representative Lucien N. Nedzi.

"Oh, I'm not so sure," replied Mr. Nedzi, as a gentle shake of his baldish head displaced wisps of white sideburns.

"I know the feeling," Mr. Rodino concurred.

The encounter, a few paces off the House floor yesterday, symbolized the burden thrust on Lucien Norbert Nedzi, a 49-year old Democrat from Michigan, House leaders named him chairman of the new Select Committee on Intelligence. Together with a companion panel in the Senate, the committee is supposed to produce a definitive report within a year on the purposes and performance of the nation's secret intelligence apparatus.

Sensitive Inquiry

Just as Mr. Rodino, a New Jersey Democrat, emerged from relative obscurity last year to direct the sensitive impeachment inquiry with a mixture of pride and trepidation, so is Mr. Nedzi now approaching the sensitive intelligence inquiry with alternating bursts of confidence and awe.

The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, two of more than a dozen surveillance agencies under examination, have been accused of improprieties here and abroad. William E. Colby, the Director of Central Intelligence, warned Congress yesterday, however, that public pursuit of "exaggerated" allegations was endangering an intelligence effort crucial to national security.

"Finding out what happened is the easy part of it," Mr. Nedzi said in an interview. "Indeed, most important elements of what the public is concerned about"—whether American citizens are subject to spying by their own Government—"already are in the public domain."

'The Big Problem'

What most concerned Mr. Nedzi, he suggested, was the conundrum at the heart of the House inquiry: "The big problem is determining the appropriate role of secret institutions in a free, democratic society. We're being called upon to resolve that issue."

Lucien Nedzi was born on May 28, 1925, the son of Polish immigrants in Hamtramck, Mich. His father was a tool and die maker. Mr. Nedzi enlisted in the Army in 1944, after completing public high school, and served in the Philippines and Japan. He received degrees in economics in 1948 and in law in 1951 from the University of Michigan. He married the former Margaret Garvey in 1952. They have five children whose ages range from 8 to 16.



His sense of concern wakens him at night

(Representative Nedzi, right, conferring with Frank Church, head of Senate committee on intelligence.)

The closest he came to the intelligence sphere, prior to his election to the House in 1961, was when he was recalled to Army duty during the Korean War and given a short course in military intelligence at Fort Riley, Kan. Mr. Nedzi was released from active duty before the training could be applied.

Liberal Reputation

As a member of Congress from Michigan's 14th District, which consists of some declining neighborhoods in Detroit and such wealthy suburbs as Grosse Pointe Shores, he established a reputation as the most liberal member of the mostly conservative House Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Nedzi was an early opponent of the Vietnam war. He also opposed the development of the B-1 bomber and the antiballistic missile system. He was the last of the white liberal Democrats in the Michigan delegation to succumb to intense constituent pressure to publicly oppose busing as a device to integrate public schools.

In late 1971, to the surprise of his colleagues, Mr. Nedzi was chosen as chairman of the Military Intelligence Subcommittee. Representative F. Edward Hébert, the Louisiana Democrat who was as hawkish as Mr. Nedzi was dovish, said the Michigan Democrat was appointed "because he's a good man, even though we're opposed philosophically."

Some of the more ardent Congressional critics of the intelligence community have suggested privately that Mr. Nedzi has not been vigilant enough in monitoring the C.I.A. and is overly inclined

to accept the agency view of questionable events.

The Nedzi subcommittee set out two years ago to conduct a broad review of the intelligence agencies but got sidetracked by a search, apparently fruitless, for possible links between the C.I.A. and the Watergate scandals.

That experience, Mr. Nedzi said, "certainly indicated the possible abuses that intelligence agencies can be involved in, either by direction of the executive branch or on their own."

Nonetheless, he said he had found senior intelligence officials, with "minor" exceptions, "to be totally candid in responding to questions put to them" at closed hearings. The difficulty, Mr. Nedzi said, was that "it has taken some time to learn to ask the right questions."

"To this day," he added, "I can't be certain we have

asked all the right questions."

Such uncertainty seems to gnaw at Mr. Nedzi. He tries to relax at home by playing the violin and by "puttering around the house" with a paint brush or wrench. Five growing children, as he puts it, sometimes necessitate "gluing the furniture together."

He has a puckish sense of humor, a gentle mien and a soft, nasal voice that belie the wrenching sense of concern that has been causing Mr. Nedzi to awaken at night and try to lose himself in such diversion as a college textbook on medieval history.

Perhaps there were more Byzantine ages than one. Mr. Nedzi keeps recalling a line from Lynon Johnson:

"Doing what is right isn't the problem; it's knowing what is right."