

House Unit Clears Rep. Harrington

Washington

The House Ethics Committee, in a surprise move, dismissed disciplinary action yesterday against Representative Michael Harrington (Dem-Mass.), who had admitted disclosing secret House testimony about CIA involvement in Chile.

The committee acted after it discovered that the House Armed Services Subcommittee session at which CIA Director William Colby testified in April, 1974, had violated House procedures in holding the closed-door meeting.

The Ethics Committee had been scheduled to begin formal hearings next Tuesday that could have led to censure or even expulsion, although the latter was considered unlikely.

At a news conference soon after the 7 to 3 decision was announced, Harrington appeared pleased but said he would continue to press for a through examination of House rules regarding classified material.

"I do regret that the manner in which it was terminated demonstrates once again the preference of this institution to deal with form rather than substance," Harrington said.

Colby had testified that millions of U.S. dollars were used to try to prevent the election of the late Chilean President Salvador Allende.

Harrington made public his testimony after first signing a statement agreeing to abide by House rules which prohibit disclosing testimony made in executive session except to another congressman.

Ethics chairman/John Flynt (Dem-Ga.) said he discovered Wednesday that only Lucien Nedzi (Dem-Mich.), chairman of the armed services subcommittee on intelligence, was present when Colby testified.

No public notice of the meeting was made, no quorum was present and no vote was taken to go into "executive session," he said. Flynt added that House rules also require at least two members be present when testimony is heard.

"In other words, no executive session occurred and the information divulged was not taken in an executive session of a committee of the House of Representatives," Flynt added.