

The Problem With Bush

Longer version filed Ford Ad.

WHEN NOMINATED to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, George Bush said he did not think that being Director would forever prevent him from seeking political office. Obviously he hopes it will not, and his hope was stroked by President Ford's declaration that Bush is not excluded from consideration as his 1976 running mate.

Bush may not have to worry about a CIA attachment becoming a political handicap. The Senate may refuse to confirm him.

Like some other ex-Congressmen (he served two terms), Bush is one of Mr. Ford's guys, which is fine. But at the CIA he would be the wrong kind of guy at the wrong place at the worst possible time.



The CIA is under a cloud of dark suspicion based on proven misdeeds. The suspicion is that the CIA is a threat to civil liberties, and perhaps to tranquillity, because it is insubordinate or otherwise immune to proper control.

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BUT LACK OF CONTROL over the CIA is no longer the gravest problem. Congress, awakened from its long sleep, is alert to its oversight duties. And the executive branch, having been reminded of the law, can keep the CIA operating this side of criminality.

Today the most pressing problem is not to prevent the CIA from doing what is forbidden. Rather, the problem is to see that it does what it is supposed to do, which is gather and report accurate information.

But gathering and reporting are different operations. And recent events have made it wise to worry about the possibility that the CIA will become compliant to political pressures in reporting intelligence information, especially information that might tarnish the image of detente.

Defense Secretary Schlesinger, an apolitical man, was the foremost critic within the administration of Secretary Kissinger's policy in negotiating with the Soviet Union — sometimes called "the policy of preemptive concession." Mr. Ford wants to replace Schlesinger with Donald Rumsfeld, another vice presidential aspirant. Thus it is all the more imperative that the CIA be run by a man not susceptible to political considerations or pressures.

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THE PROBLEM WITH BUSH is less that he has a political past than that he so obviously and avidly wants to have a political future.

As chairman of the Republican National Committee during Watergate, Bush was very considerate about the man who appointed him. In spite of all the available evidence, he never expressed independent judgments inconvenient to Richard Nixon.

It might be rash to expect Bush to display at the CIA a capacity for politically inconvenient independence in judging intelligence. That is why the Senate may ask Mr. Ford for another nominee.