

Responsibility for CIA Aid Debated

Washington

President Johnson, it was reported on responsible authority last night, was "totally unaware" of the Central Intelligence Agency's financial involvement with the National Student Association.

This official said he further believes that no member of the President's staff was aware of the facts in the case until "very recently."

HUMPHREY

This disclaimer of White House involvement was at odds with other reports.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, for example, was reliably reported to have been informed by NSA officials as early as July, 1966, that they were dependent on the CIA for large portions of their budget.

They asked Humphrey's help in obtaining funds from private organizations.

Moreover, one of the highest officials in both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations stated yesterday that the White House and the State Department had known for years that the CIA was

subsidizing student organizations in this country.

He was not certain, he said, whether either President Kennedy or President Johnson was personally informed of the subsidies.

DECISION

But the decision to put millions of dollars into the covert subsidy operation was made "at the highest levels of the government," He said, and not by the CIA alone. He implied that the idea may have been born in the State Department.

In any event, this former official declared, it is unfair for the CIA to "take the rap" now.

Under President Kennedy, he said, the CIA's operations were carefully supervised by an interdepartmental committee that included representatives of the State Department and Presidential assistant McGeorge Bundy. Since Bundy's departure, he said, the chief responsibility for CIA liaison in the White House has rested with Walt W. Rostow.

REPLY

In reply, a present official of the Administration said the interdepartmental committee would not necessarily review in detail each year a long-standing program such as the CIA subsidy to NSA. The subsidy was begun 13 years ago and there is no reason to assume, the Administration's spokesman said, that the present White House staff — including Rostow — had any specific knowledge of it. He said he could say categorically that Mr. Johnson knew nothing about it.

The former official who revealed the White House involvement in the NSA affair said that he was personally aware in the early 1960s that students were receiving Government subsidies to enable them to attend international student gatherings.

"The object," he said, "was not to subvert students but to make it possible for the American student point of view to be presented. I recall that about 80 went to (a conference at) Helsinki. Many of them were very left-wing and were very critical of some aspects of American policy. But they handled themselves very well.

It would have been difficult if not impossible, he said, to secure Government funds to subsidize openly student trips of this sort. Therefore, he said, the CIA was used. It had plenty of money which could be spent without any public accounting.

Efforts to reach Bundy and Rostow failed. The State Department had no comment. Nor did the White House press office.

CONGRESS

While the Administration kept its own counsel, new demands arose on Capitol Hill for closer supervision of the CIA.

Majority leader Mike Mansfield (Dem-Mont.) denounced the Agency's involvement in student affairs as a "move toward big brotherism."

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