

New Chief for the C.I.A.

The Central Intelligence Agency needed a change of leadership, and President Johnson has picked the best available man in Deputy Director Richard Helms. Admiral Raborn, the retiring director, was chosen in 1964 because he had done an outstanding job in developing the Polaris missile and, in the process, had established excellent relations with Congress. It did not hurt that he was a Texan who campaigned for Mr. Johnson.

As it turned out, Admiral Raborn's relations with Congress proved far from happy and his complete inexperience in intelligence work and foreign affairs were serious handicaps. He was a good man in the wrong job.

Mr. Helms is a career intelligence officer who has had primary responsibility for much of the C.I.A.'s administrative work in the last few years. He is experienced, sophisticated and knowledgeable. Moreover, he is highly regarded by the C.I.A. corps which has been riven by internal quarrels.

Good as the appointment is, it does not lessen the desirability of tighter Congressional supervision over this crucial agency. Legislators expert in foreign affairs should share with members of the armed services and appropriations committees the duty for overseeing an organization whose work directly affects—and sometimes even makes—foreign policy.

The combination of a more effective director and more effective Congressional watchdogs could do much to heighten public confidence that the vast powers of C.I.A. will not be abused.