

C.I.A. Denies Using Student Exchanges As a Cover Abroad

By E. W. KENWORTHY
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WASHINGTON, July 29 —

Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, assured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today that the student exchange program had not been used as a cover for C.I.A. agents abroad.

Mr. Helms further assured the committee that no agents had been planted in the Peace Corps.

Because he volunteered the information and because he reported no infiltration, the committee, particularly Chairman J. W. Fulbright, was apparently disposed in Mr. Helms's favor.

Mr. Fulbright praised Mr. Helms's testimony and accepted his apology for a letter that supported an editorial critical of Mr. Fulbright.

The refusal of Mr. Helms's predecessor, Adm. William F. Raborn, to answer Mr. Fulbright's questions about the student exchange program had aroused the committee's concern.

It had also been a factor in producing the 14-to-5 vote last May 17 by which the panel reported a resolution to include three of its members on the subcommittee supervising C.I.A. activities. The watchdog subcommittee is now composed of seven ranking members of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.

The Senate sidetracked this resolution July 14 by 61 to 28. Mr. Helms appeared before the committee this morning following a furor on the Senate floor yesterday over his letter praising an editorial in The St. Louis Globe-Democrat on July 14 that attacked Mr. Fulbright.

Entitled "Brickbats for Fulbright," the editorial said that the Senate, by killing the proposal to expand the watchdog committee, had given the Arkansas Democrat "his come-uppance." The plan of the "crafty Arkansan," the editorial went on, could have meant "the end" of an agency whose "accomplishments are legion."

Mr. Helms quickly called Mr. Fulbright after Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, Democrat of Minnesota, had read the editorial and letter on the Senate floor. Mr. Helms said he had made a mistake, apologized for the letter and arranged to appear before the committee.

After a two-hour session this morning, Mr. Helms told reporters:



SENATE ENCOUNTER: Richard Helms, left, Central Intelligence Agency chief, meets Senator J. W. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, before panel. Mr. Helms had been criticized for praising editorial assailing the Senator.

United Press International Telephoto

"I realize it was a mistake. I regret it and I have apologized."

Mr. Fulbright said Mr. Helms had been "very forthright" and "I certainly accepted his apology."

Drafted by Assistant

The chairman said Mr. Helms had told the committee that the letter had been drafted by an assistant and that he had signed it, along with several others submitted to him at the time, without giving it the attention he should have.

Apparently, Mr. Fulbright said, Mr. Helms's subordinate had focused his attention on the two final sentences in the editorial praising the C.I.A. rather than on the criticism of the chairman.

Mr. McCarthy, who had sponsored the expansion resolution, said Mr. Helms's explanation had been "quite satisfactory."

After the apology had been tendered and accepted, the discussion ranged over C.I.A. activities. Some members said later that they had learned considerably more about the agency than they had from the occasional appearances before the committee of the last three directors—Allen W. Dulles, John A. McCone and Admiral Raborn.

The student exchange program was conceived by Mr. Fulbright in 1945. He suggested using the local foreign currency proceeds from the sale of surplus United States property abroad to finance the exchange of students, teachers, scientists

and artists. The success of the program is a matter of great pride to Mr. Fulbright.

When Admiral Raborn made one of his rare appearances before the committee last February, Mr. Fulbright asked him whether the C.I.A. had ever used the program as a cover for agents.

Admiral Raborn refused to answer on the ground that the question went to "the source and methods" of the agency's intelligence operations rather than to "substantive intelligence." He said he was prohibited under his interpretation of the law creating the agency, from supplying such information.

In response to Mr. Fulbright further questioning, Admiral Raborn acknowledged that he would give such information, if requested, to the watchdog committee headed by Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, who is chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

In a recent television interview, Admiral Raborn said he had answered "no" to Mr. Fulbright's question on whether the exchange program had been a cover for agents.

During the debate yesterday, Mr. Fulbright said the admiral had "suffered a failure of memory."

The questioning of Mr. Helms was reported to have been blunt but not aggressive and that the members, as the Democratic leader, Mike Mansfield of Mon-

tana, put it, were impressed by the director's "candor."

There was no support in the committee for a demand by Senator Wayne Morse, Democrat of Oregon, that Mr. Helms resign.

Mr. McCarthy said he thought the discussion gave some hope of reaching a compromise whereby Mr. Helms would give the Foreign Relations Committee the kind of reports he gives the Russell subcommittee.

Mr. Fulbright said he was not so sure about that.