

*SF Examiner 25 Dec 1967*  
**Carl Rowan**

## The Good Ol' CIA



WASHINGTON — Some pretty smart and powerful Americans are concluding, ruefully, that that nasty old Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) isn't as easy to replace as they thought.

Men who got swept up in a wave of anti-CIA idealism months ago aren't so sure of their ground now that they stand face-to-face with some pragmatic problems of national interest and survival.

I refer, of course, to the revelations that CIA was covertly financing student groups and a host of other voluntary, or private, organizations. American indignation at the time was so great that President Johnson ordered CIA out of the "covert support" business insofar as educational, cultural and similar groups are concerned.

THEN A HIGH-POWERED committee set about trying to fashion some kind of clean, above-board financing of these groups. The committee has found that idealistic talk is easy, but that it doesn't mean certain ideological challenges.

The first fact of life that the committee is up against is that the Soviet Union is still spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year, much of it covertly, to influence political parties, labor unions, student organizations, journalistic societies and many similar groups all over the world.

If the committee were to report the whole truth, which it isn't likely to, it would admit that it can't conceive of any nice, clean, genteel, open-and-above-board system for doing effectively what CIA was doing.

Let private groups send students to international conferences to do intellectual battle with Communist-financed students? Well, it turns out that "private money"

exists more in the talking than in the hour of need.

More important, student groups had a vital back-up of intelligence and other information about who their adversaries were, who was helping them and what the foes were trying to do when the CIA was subsidizing them.

To send American kids off harum-scarum to a "world youth festival" in, say Prague or Warsaw now, backed by little more than the cash of some well-meaning private group, would be like sending Central High's football team out to play the Los Angeles Rams.

Then, there is the ugly reality that sometimes the groups needing a subsidy are foreign organizations in country X whose members do not have the resources to combat groups that are heavily financed by the Soviet Union or Communist China.

The groups on "our side" are eager to use U.S. money to fight democracy's battle. But when the opposition's funds are given secretly, pro-democratic groups simply cannot afford to take money openly from a quasi-public U.S. organization — nor from a private group, for that matter.

Why must we try to match the Communists in their dirty tactics? Someone surely asks. Because we want to win.

SOME AMERICANS pretend that we only play the game cleanly, not caring whether we win or lose. The truth is that it is an American tradition to win. An American company or a labor union goes right to the jugular vein in trying to outstrip a competitor. The committee probably will reach agreement in January. But don't you believe for a moment that it will produce a sanitary way of doing some of this nation's vital business in a mean and sordid world.