

SENATORS PRESS 'WATCHDOG' ISSUE

Floor Debate Likely on Plan to Expand C.I.A. Panel

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 3 — A Senate debate appeared likely today on the question of expanding the "watchdog" committee that provides surveillance over the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Knowledgeable Senate sources were pessimistic, however, about the prospect of rounding up enough votes to force an expansion of the watchdog group over its own objections.

It became known yesterday that Senator Richard B. Russell, Georgia Democrat who is the group's senior member, had rejected a proposal by the Foreign Relations Committee that three of its members be added to the "watchdogs."

Mr. Russell wrote Senator J. W. Fulbright, Arkansas Democrat who is chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, to that effect.

Mr. Fulbright will probably bring up the matter in the next meeting of his committee, which is scheduled for next week. There was some doubt whether he had enough votes in the committee to take the proposal to the floor of the Senate with committee backing.

If the issue develops through formal action of the Foreign Relations Committee, it will insure floor debate.

If it does not, Senator Eugene McCarthy, Democrat of Minnesota, who has been a persistent critic of Congress's method of supervising C.I.A. activities, is prepared to move on the Senate floor to expand the "watchdog" committee.

Experienced Senate headcounters considered it unlikely that, in either case, the Senate would overrule the Russell group and add members of the Foreign Relations Committee to it.

They said Mr. Russell, one of the most expert of Senate strategists, would hardly have rejected the opportunity to negotiate the matter with Mr. Fulbright if he had not been confident that he could win a vote of the entire Senate.

Moreover, it was suggested, a debate would be unlikely to change the situation. For one thing, the Senate is always reluctant to overrule one of its senior chairmen, and this would be particularly so in the case of the C.I.A. supervisory group, since its work is secret and many Senators are chary of tampering with "security matters."

Also, the present "watchdog" group is composed entirely of senior members of the Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee, of which Mr. Russell is chairman.

These committees form a power center in the Senate, since virtually every Senator at one time or another needs the approval of one or both for military or civilian projects in his state.

"The sanction for Russell's rejection of our request," a Foreign Relations Committee member said today, "is that he has the votes."

Nevertheless, there appears to be in the Senate more open discontent about C.I.A. surveillance than usual. Foreign Relations Committee members complain, for instance, that when C.I.A. officials testify, even in executive session, they constantly invoke "security" and refuse to answer searching questions.

These questions ostensibly would be answered if put to the C.I.A. by the "watchdog" group. Other Senators are not sure that such questions are asked and cannot learn the answers from the "watchdogs."

Some members of the Foreign Relations Committee, in particular, believe they need to

know more about the effect of C.I.A. activities and about reports on foreign policy making within the Administration.

They also think that members whose particular concern is foreign policy, rather than defense policy, might exert a useful influence on the C.I.A. through participation in the secret "watchdog" committee.

The details of Senator Russell's letter of refusal to Mr. Fulbright were not available, except that he had reported the surveillance group as unanimously opposed to broadening its membership and that he had invoked security as one reason for the refusal.

Stanford Pact Opposed
STANFORD, Calif., May 3

(AP)—A graduate student group protested yesterday against a classified contract that Stanford University has with the C.I.A. in engineering research.

But a university spokesman said: "Stanford will not knowingly accept any contract or grant in which the university is used as a cover to clandestine activities."

The protest was staged by the Graduate Coordinating Council's academic freedom committee. The group picketed the school's administrative offices and met for more than half an hour with Hubert Heffner, associate provost for research.