

Overseeing C.I.A.

Adequate Congressional supervision of the Central Intelligence Agency, long advocated by this newspaper, has been advanced by the surprise inclusion of Chairman Fulbright and two key members of his Foreign Relations Committee in meetings of the Senate panel that watches over the C.I.A.

Proposals to broaden the "watchdog" subcommittee in this way were fought bitterly last year by its chairman, Senator Russell of Georgia, and shelved by a 61-to-28 vote at an unusual closed session of the Senate in July. Mr. Russell's abrupt turnabout now is evidently designed to avoid resumption of the struggle at a time when a less favorable balance in Congress threatens many other difficulties for the Administration and its legislative leaders.

Over the past two decades, 150 resolutions introduced in Congress have testified to concern over inadequate scrutiny of the C.I.A.'s clandestine activities and intelligence evaluations. Senator Russell and his ad hoc subcommittee of six—selected, with C.I.A. screening, from the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees—have functioned less to investigate or "control" the C.I.A. than to shield it from its critics.

The Eisenhower Administration's Hoover Commission and other critics have proposed establishment of a powerful monitoring body with its own staff, similar to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. But these proposals have come to naught.

Senator Russell's current move does not go far, but it is much better than nothing. Senators Fulbright, Mansfield and Hickenlooper are sitting with the existing subcommittee by Mr. Russell's invitation, rather than by right.

Nevertheless, the quality of the three new participants should assure more effective probing of C.I.A. testimony. Senator Hickenlooper has long been instrumental in close Congressional supervision of secret atomic policy. Senators Fulbright and Mansfield have led the fight for effective oversight of C.I.A. activities. They will now try to obtain it through the expanded Russell subcommittee. If that proves insufficient after a fair trial, they undoubtedly will resume the struggle, inside or outside the panel, for better legislative control.