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Wilson Dodges Query on CIA

By Karl E. Meyer
Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, April 18—Prime Minister Wilson sidestepped questions today about the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's role in bringing down the left-wing Jagan regime in British Guiana before independence.

He told Parliament the present Labor government, which took office in October of 1964, was not responsible for the colony in 1963. In that year the CIA allegedly gave backing to a general strike that crippled the regime of Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan.

"So far as British-administered territories now are concerned," he said, "I know of no activities of this kind, and you can be pretty sure if there were any I should."

Article Unchallenged

The effect was to leave unchallenged a story in the April 16 London Sunday Times which told of how the CIA allegedly poured money into British Guiana, using British and American unions as "fronts."

Left-wing Laborites urged an investigation of the charges, but Wilson replied that the country—independent since May, 1966 as Guyana—was self-governing and Britain had no responsibility.

It is thought unlikely that Guyana's present Prime Minister, Forbes Burnham, would approve an investigation since the ensuing controversy would benefit his adversary, Jagan.

The exchange in the House of Commons was the first significant backlash in Britain arising from disclosures that the CIA had contributed to private organizations.

Spending Charged

The Sunday Times article alleged that the CIA had spent upwards of \$700,000 over a five-year period to abet a union uprising which culminated in a 79-day general strike in 1963.

According to the paper, the funds flowed through the Public Services of International of London and the U.S. Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. The PSI is an international organization representing 3.5 million government workers in some 80 countries.

In a statement today, PSI denied it had done anything improper in sending money to an affiliated union on strike in British Guiana. But the statement admitted that the PSI affiliate in America, the Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, had been a past beneficiary of CIA largesse.

On all sides, there is agreement that the general strike led Britain to change the colony's voting laws in a manner

that favored the anti-Jagan parties in a 1964 election.

Quintin Hogg, a Tory spokesman, said today "are there not many foreign-originating bodies seeking to subvert law and order in British-administered territories? Why is it only those coming from the United States which excite members opposite?"

Wilson replied that wherever such activities occurred he was sure he had the backing of Parliament in countering them—adding tartly that he had the backing of half the house when his government tried to deal with subversion in Rhodesia.

It was noted that no Tory rose to deny allegations made in the Sunday Times article about events which occurred before Wilson's election in October, 1964.