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DICK THORNBURG
Editor

SHIEL DUNSKER
Business Manager

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The University and the CIA

We are not sure what Sen. Fred Harris of Oklahoma is talking about because we are not sure he knows what he is talking about.

The senator in a home-state speech said categorically there should be "no use or infiltration whatsoever" by the Central Intelligence Agency in university research projects sponsored abroad by our government.

This flap all stems from a revelation that in 1959 some CIA employes were used by Michigan State University in fulfilling a government contract to assist the Vietnamese government in beefing up its police.

The government frequently hires university people to advise foreign governments which request the advice.

Now if the CIA fellows could provide the best advice, there is nothing wrong with that.

If the CIA people are as expert as they are cracked up to be they should be used anywhere they can do the job. It would be a mistake to send CIA agents into a friendly country to re-arrange the local government. But when a friendly country asks for help we should provide them with the best, whether the people come from the CIA or a university or anywhere else.

Sen. Harris said the CIA should be forbidden to use any university mission as a "cover" for its operations abroad. It is by no means clear this was the case in Viet Nam. But if it is necessary and useful to obtain pertinent information, we see nothing wrong with the CIA using whatever "cover" is convenient and effective. Otherwise it wouldn't amount to much.