

Integrity Compromised

CPYRGHT

Few areas of American life escaped unscathed from the disclosures of secret Central Intelligence Agency aid, set off last month when Ramparts magazine exposed the CIA's link to the National Students Association.

Religious groups, apparently some labor unions, and even a Latin American aid group headed by Norman Thomas found themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, wound up in the CIA web.

The deepest tragedy for teachers, however, came when it was disclosed that some educators had fallen under the CIA spell. Evidence dug up by the New York Times, the Washington Post, and other newspapers, appears to indicate that William G. Carr, executive secretary of the National Education Association and secretary general of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, knowingly accepted CIA aid and helped organize a foundation that became a transmission belt for CIA money.

Carr's intentions may have been "honorable." Teachers who view the East-West struggle as one of primacy may sometimes forget how a democracy should operate, and substitute expedience for principle. If money is easily available for international projects—even if it comes from the CIA—why not take it and put it to use?

Such "gifts" are, eventually, found out, as they were in this case. The integrity of teachers has been compromised, and American educators who go abroad, seeking links with colleagues in Europe, Asia, or Africa, will henceforth be under suspicion that they may not be acting independently, but as arms of their government—and, if so, what makes them any better than agents of totalitarian lands? For the hundreds of thousands of teachers in the U.S. who are NEA members, certainly the recent disclosures must shake their faith in their organization.

A full financial accounting of NEA funds sent abroad, as called for by AFT President Charles Cogen, ought to be immediately forthcoming. The education profession is too vital a force in our society for the air surrounding it to remain unclear.