

CIA's Objectives To Bill Apparent

FOIA b3b

By Bill Connelly

Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Although the Central Intelligence Agency will not say publicly why it wants exemption from a bill protecting the privacy rights of federal employees, its objections are beginning to be known here. In fact, it takes only a careful reading of the bill to see why it might disturb an agency that must protect itself from penetration by unfriendly agents and maintain strict internal security.

A
News
Analysis

A m o n g other things, Sen. Sam J. Ervin's bill would prohibit government agencies from asking their employees questions about their sex life, personal finances, relatives and religious beliefs. It also gives employees the right to take noseys supervisors to court.

Implication

Ervin has implied that the CIA primarily wants to retain the right to administer lie - detector tests and psychological tests to its employees. But with or without such tests, under the bill the CIA and the National Security Agency could not question employees, or even prospective employees, about:

—Charges or indications of sexual problems which might make the employe susceptible to blackmail.

—Financial problems that might make the employe vulnerable to bribery.

—Relatives in other countries that might somehow make the employe vulnerable to family pressures.

—Organizations that the employe belongs to, or meetings that he attends in his off-duty hours, even if these are suspect activities.

Could See Lawyer

Furthermore, if the employe were called on the carpet and asked such questions, he could demand to see his lawyer immediately and could take his supervisors to federal district court for violating his privacy rights.

The CIA is said to be especially concerned about the possibility of being dragged into court, where some of its secret methods might be divulged.

The Ervin bill has been amended to give directors of the CIA and the security agency some latitude in personnel matters. It would permit them to waive the questioning restrictions if they felt they had to do so in the interest of national security.

This probably would give the directors enough leeway to ask any questions they please. But the bill provides that the directors must personally decide when a specific case involves national security, which could be cumbersome in an organization with hundreds of employes, all of whom must be known to be trustworthy.

Would Run Risk

Even in this type of case the agency would run the risk of being taken to court by a protesting employe.

These are said to be the essential reasons the CIA is trying to get out from under the Ervin bill. Its spokesmen have also argued to some senators that since the Federal Bureau of Investigation was excluded from the bill by a committee, the intelligence agencies certainly should be. The FBI was exempted, apparently, on the grounds that it needs clear authority to investigate employees of other agencies.

Senate staff members say the CIA has been extremely active this week in trying to make its case for exemption. The agency was successful Tuesday in getting the Senate to postpone floor action on the measure until about Sept. 19.

Floor Speech

It was this last-minute request for delay that irked Ervin and prompted his angry floor speech about the CIA. He contends that during the year the bill was in preparation the CIA declined numerous invitations to state its objections to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee. On one occasion, he said, the agency submitted a 10-page memo on the bill — marked secret — but that no other requests were made for changes.

Some of the objections raised in the memo, Ervin said, were satisfied by committee amendments. But, he contended that some of the objections opposing the bill were "specious."

CPYRGHT