

JUL 30 1966

Touchy Senate

The letter written by the new head of the Central Intelligence Agency praising a newspaper editorial critical of Sen. J. W. Fulbright was lacking in discretion, but it had one revealing effect: Its reception in the Senate suggests that skins may be, if possible, even thinner on Capitol Hill than at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue in the White House.

It is surprising that the professional head of a service so secret should make such a public gaffe, particularly at this time. CIA Director Richard Helms' agency has just weathered an effort by Sen. Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee to gain a role in supervising the CIA. It was a St. Louis Globe-Democrat editorial lauding Senate rejection of that effort that drew Mr. Helms' letter expressing his "pleasure" in reading it.

The timing was bad, the source startling, but the innocuously worded letter scarcely merited its huffy reception in the Senate. Sen. Eugene McCarthy, D-Minn., said, to apparent general approval, that the CIA head "owes an apology to every member of the Senate."

Mr. Helms has made his apology, by telephone call and in person. But the Senate's wounds can be no more than thin-skin deep. Sen. Fulbright, himself, has made statements more insulting in implication about Mr. Helms' boss, the President of the United States.

CPYRGHT