

St. Paul Dispatch
Leave the Spies Alone

CIA Is a Necessary Evil

By FRANK GETLEIN

In the swelling crop of this year's probable misses in Congress, two proposals command especially high odds against their ever getting anywhere.

Submitted by Democratic Senators Young of Ohio and McCarthy of Minnesota, the proposals would attempt to bring the Central Intelligence Agency under congressional scrutiny. Never.

The CIA is difficult to explain as an inviolable island in the midst of a government usually subject to congressional shot and shell. Who likes spies? Despite recent romantic literature on the subject, most Americans probably still hold to the old-fashioned belief that spying is something we'd rather not do.

Right there is part of the reason for the great latitude accorded the CIA. The agency, like James Bond, is licensed to do the dirty work that needs to be done. The rest of us, including our elected representatives, don't have to think about it and hence are, obviously, not responsible for it. It's not us. It's that crowd of spooks out in Virginia.

Sen. Young, in his bill of

particulars last week, complained that "Wrapped in its cloak of secrecy, the CIA has, in effect, been making foreign policy . . . has assumed responsibilities which were heretofore solely those of the President and Congress . . . has gradually taken on the character of an invisible government, answerable only to itself."

There have been times when many Americans have wished the invisible government would be a little more invisible, but neither Young's conclusions nor those of Sen. McCarthy, follow in the least from their premises.

THEY LEAVE out the thing that makes it all possible, even inevitable. We are now a great power. Power, to be realized at all, has to be absolute. And absolute power has to be basically unaccounted for and carried on in a high degree of secrecy.

This is the fundamental principle of the secret police. In czarist Russia as in Soviet Russia, a great deal of the impact of the state upon the citizen-subject has been through the secret police, answerable to no public body.

In a democracy such expressions face special problems. But man's ingenuity is equal to the challenge of power in whatever guise. Hence, the CIA. Its predecessor, the OSS of World War II, was a schoolboy gambol, with free-wheeling scholars gypsies wandering through enemy-occupied Europe with bags of gold tied round their middles.

The change, a profound one, required signification and the transformation of the OSS into CIA did the trick.

At that, we're lucky. Historically most great powers use their symbols of power against their own people. So far at least, the CIA is strictly for foreigners.