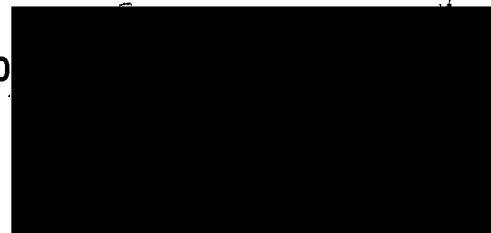


JUL 6 1960



HARTFORD (Conn.)
COURANT

Circ.: m. 104,765
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Who's Going to Watch The Watchdogs?

To the Editor of *The Courant*:

With all the hue and cry for "watchdog" committees by Congress over virtually every Executive function of our government, it may be in order to ask what the watchdogs have been watching and what responsibility do they assume for unauthorized activities by an agency such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration?

The chairman of the Senate "watchdog" committee for NASA is Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. It was under the auspices of NASA that the world renowned spy flight by Powers is said to have been made (with the initials NASA on his plane shot down over the USSR May 1). Chairman Johnson's reaction to the affair was speedy. He called for silence in the interest of national unity. Apparently, in this instance, he was quite willing to let the President assume full responsibility. Though aspiring to that highest office of the land himself, he did not demonstrate much taste for leadership at a time when things went wrong.

Chairman Johnson's reaction might have been quite different if NASA had achieved some glorious feat in the exploration of outer space as specifically authorized by the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958. Though the first official announcement covering Powers' mishap came from NASA's Hugh Dryden, deputy administrator, the buck was quickly passed to CIA as the dire culprit. And now the vogue is for strengthening Congressional controls over CIA with a joint Senate-House "watchdog" committee! Would Lyndon Johnson head up this one too?

A. H. Whitelaw

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