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Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00
STAR-TELEGRAM

M - 103,937
S - 214,409

FOIAb3b

FEB 28 1967

Fort Worth's Rep. Jim Wright Joins Critics of CIA's Financial Backing of NSA

Star-Telegram Washington Bureau
WASHINGTON — Rep. Jim Wright of Fort Worth has joined the growing chorus on Capitol Hill in protesting the Central Intelligence Agency's financial backing of the National Student Association.

"The elaborate back-stage maneuvering — funneling the money to various private endowments and through them to the students — makes us

look silly and clumsy as well as phony and deceitful," Wright said.

The Texas congressman explained "It is not that our government was helping to finance these student trips. It is that we engaged in a deliberate, diabolic deception. The fact that we were caught at it is merely the inevitable by-product of the

original wrong."

Wright said that the U.S. State Department and United States Information Agency have openly sponsored many cultural visits, by American student groups and others, throughout the world. "We've never tried to hide it. Why should we?" he asked.

He pointed out that other governments, including the Soviet, had been sending official delegations to international student meetings under no camouflage. These governments "were making ideological inroads among young people, particularly in Africa. Obviously, America needs to counter the damage by representation at these

meetings from American campuses," Wright said.

"Why not just admit frankly what we were doing in the first place? And why in heaven's name the CIA? The students weren't spies! Apparently they operated as completely free agents and spoke their own honest opinions at these international gatherings, in the very best American tradition of free speech," Wright continued.

The Texas congressman said he thought the episode had damaged the student group's credibility.

"The CIA has a legitimate place and does a thoroughly creditable job—in its field. But its field is not propaganda nor the conduct of foreign policy. Its field is the gathering of intelligence," Wright continued.

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