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Letters to the editor

The CIA's tormenters reply

Your recent editorial ("Another watchman to watch," July 17) attacking our work presents a dishonest brief for the Central Intelligence Agency. (The work involves public exposure of alleged CIA agents abroad, which resulted in the shooting up of an American official's house in Jamaica. —Ed.)

Your assertion that the CIA is "long since officially declawed" is ludicrous. For more than three years, the Congress labored with no success to pass a charter for the CIA — not to declaw it, but merely to minimize the possibility of the more blatant abuses for which the CIA is noted. No significantly restrictive legislation affecting the CIA has ever been passed.

And when you refer to the CIA's activities as "undercover maneu-

vering" — strictly limited to collecting information," you perpetuate the CIA's favorite myth, that it is primarily an intelligence gathering agency. We have never objected to intelligence gathering; we object to covert interference in the affairs of other nations. We object to bribery, corruption, blackmail, arson and murder, all of which have been, and remain, the operational tools of the CIA. There is no law which prevents the CIA from buying elections, operating phony "news" services, arming "rebels" or bombing buildings, for example, all of which it does.

At least you recognize that the Intelligence Identities Protection Act is a law aimed solely at the Covert Action Information Bulletin. You do not note, however, that we are private citizens who, having never worked for the government nor signed any agreements, are researching unclassified material and, with no inside sources, carefully reaching our own journalistic conclusions. The First Amendment does not allow such conduct to be criminalized, as this act would purport to do. That you, as a newspaper, do not recognize this fact, is dangerous — to all the press. It is to your advantage that the First Amendment protects us, as well as you.

You may disagree with our views on the CIA. You may even accept, as you apparently do, the most blatant lies of the U.S.-supported opposition party in Jamaica. But, that you would welcome an Official Secrets Act in this country is frightening.

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William Schaap

Ellen Ray

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