

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.
GAZETTE

M - 108,821

S - 124,741

NOV 16 1975

Frank Church on Colby, Bush

We agree with Senator Frank Church that the Republican handyman George Bush should not be planted in the vacancy left by William E. Colby at the CIA. Where we fear we have to break with Senator Church is on the question of Colby's removal, yes or no. Church doesn't think he should have been. We think he should have been, though not, to be sure, for the reasons that he likely was, which is what upsets Church as chairman of the special Senate committee investigating the whole of the American Intelligence "community."

Colby, by CIA standards at least, had been fairly forthcoming in testimony before the Church Committee — forthcoming, that is, in comparison with the weasling Richard Helms, say — and so the chairman naturally feels that any successor will be less forthcoming than Colby: that in fact, the whole circular shifting of the old familiar faces was, as much as anything else, an attempt by President Ford and Henry Kissinger to put the kibosh on the investigation. There is something to this, but the reason why we, too, say that Colby was removed for the wrong reasons is that Gerald Ford is another of those increasingly familiar American Presidents who never does anything good for the right reasons.

Actually, our position with regard to Colby really is that he never should have been confirmed as Director of the CIA in the first place, it being in fact an appointment that we bitterly opposed before and during the confirmation fight.

But Bill Colby is history now, though a kind of history that will not down easily with the defenders of Colby, so many of whom (though we hasten to say, not Frank Church) tend to equate the old unquestioned "black" tricks of the CIA as we have known up to now — Colby's personally-supervised "Operation Phoenix" in Vietnam, the Bay of Pigs, Chile, etc. — with the health and wellbeing of this supposedly reasonably open democratic republic.

In the instant matter of the Bush appointment, Senator Church's (to us) incontrovertible argument is that George Bush not only is remarkably unqualified for the job, nice guy even though he may be, but actively disqualified, being the GOP "handyman" that we have called him.

George Bush is the son of a former U. S. Senator from Connecticut who made the familiar trek southward to Texas to try to make even more money even faster and succeeded eminently, thanks to the off-shore oil bonanza that President Eisenhower handed over to then Governor Allan Shivers in exchange for Shivers's and the state's electoral support in 1952.

In Texas, Bush — though a hereditary Republican, unlike most of his peers in the regional confraternity — soon became an adornment among the new breed of Southern Republican politicians. He was elected to the U. S. House of Representatives and might still be there, had it not been for an abortive bid for a seat in the Senate.

The only (theoretically) non-partisan position Bush has occupied since first coming before the public's general attention was that of U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

The Ambassadorship to the U. N. should be more than just theoretically non-political, needless to say. Adlai E. Stevenson — whose personal political ambitions were never really much stronger than a koala's survival instinct, and those pretty well spent by then — tried to be as non-political in the post as a man could be, only to be badly used by John Kennedy in the Bay of Pigs matter.

Arthur J. Goldberg was similarly "used" by Lyndon Johnson at the U. N. as a kind of gloss on the Vietnam business, though Goldberg did run for elective office later on.

George Bush appears to have performed at the U. N. with a reasonable degree of non-partisanship. But it was after that temporary assignment that he was moved to the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee, a quite different business and one that bears directly on his fitness to be Director of the CIA. And if that wasn't enough, President Ford, with his instinct genius for piling gaffe upon gaffe, said shortly after Bush's nomination was announced that this should not be construed as in any way ruling Bush out of consideration for a spot on the ticket with him in 1976.

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HERE WE COME to an interesting little sidelight on the combined questions of Senator Frank Church's stand for Colby, but against Bush on the grounds of lack of qualifications stressed above. Colby, since being freed from the office (he is continuing in it, but only on an interim basis, pending the confirmation of Bush or some other successor), understandably has tended to side with Senator Church's interpretation of the behind-the-scenes motivations that led to his ouster, but at the same time thinks, *contra* Church, that Bush will be jes' dandy for the CIA job.

We agree with Colby that perhaps we could do with a touch less career professionalism in the CIA directorship at this time, Colby himself being his own best evidence. However, it is a form almost of simple-mindedness to mention George Bush in the same breath with John J. McCloy, a former director of the agency brought in from the outside world. Bush, like McCloy, is a non-professional in the area of counter-intelligence, but that is both the beginning of the comparison and the end of it.