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Our U. S. Spy System

Central Intelligence Agency, which attempts to do for the United States what the Russian spy system does for the Soviet Union, has been in the public eye in recent days.

The hidden nature of its activities was discussed in the Senate by Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, who is a friend of the agency, but believes Congress should have more control over its activities and expenditures than it now has.

Mansfield is sponsor of a resolution calling for the creation of a joint committee which will do for Central Intelligence what the joint committee does for atomic energy.

Another event which put the CIA into public focus was the appearance in U. S. News & World Report of an interview with Allen W. Dulles, director of the agency. Mr. Dulles confirmed that the agency works under a deep cloak of secrecy. Not even the General Accounting Office knows the names of the agents, the number of agents, nor how much money the agency spends and for what purposes.

At least one foreign government would like to have a list of persons gathering intelligence for the United States. Great care is exercised to make sure such a list is not exposed to the danger of being discovered by foreign spies. So one wonders whether the Mansfield program for giving Congress more check on the agency will contribute to the secrecy required or detract from it.

Every American wants to know how our spy system compares with the Russian system. Mr. Dulles told his interviewers the advantages are with the Russians. They have far greater facilities for operating in the United States than we have behind the iron curtain. Furthermore, the Russians can pick up morsels of intelligence from the mass of information printed in the United States to inform Americans.

Mr. Dulles doesn't say how successful CIA is in ferreting out information about this country's enemies and their plans, but he says he considers CIA an efficient organization, which is reassuring.