

Senate Foreign Relations Interrogators Turn Amiable

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Once upon a time the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was regarded as the club of clubs, a place of lofty and bipartisan inde-

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pendence, a kleig-lighted interrogation chamber for American foreign policy.

Yesterday it performed like a mild, often amiable, hazing society for three of the Nixon Administration's nominees to high position in the foreign policy establishment.

They passed before the committee in quick succession: James Keogh, formerly chief speech writer to President Nixon, nominated to head the United States Information Agency; retiring Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard M. Helms to become ambassador to Iran and former White House domestic advisor Daniel P. Moynihan nominated as ambassador to India.

"Why do you want to be ambassador to India?" chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) asked Moynihan, who had served as President Nixon's resident intellectual in poverty and urbanology.

"Well," replied the momentarily flustered Moynihan, "first of all, the President asked me. He called me up one Saturday morning and asked me if I was interested in being ambassador to the world's largest democracy."

The closest Fulbright came to his famous ascription was in questioning Helms about operations of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty behind what used to be described as the Iron Curtain. Radio Free Europe was once directed and financed by the CIA.

What is the point, Ful-

bright asked Helms, of the United States spending \$38 million for Radio Free Europe if it is not to promote the overthrow of East European Communist governments.

It was, Helms answered, to expose listeners in Eastern Europe "more to our way of thinking."

Fulbright objected to what he described as "overkill" in spending \$38 million for Radio Free Europe in addition to \$50 million annually for the Voice of America.

"Why don't we get up a Radio Free China?" the chairman dourly asked.

"I've often wondered," Helms replied.

Helms weathered imperceptibly a minor salvo of questions on Iran's \$2 billion in arms spending, on links between the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. and CIA and, finally, on the use of former CIA operatives in the Watergate bugging case.

"They were retired. I don't have any control over men after they leave," said Helms, testily. It was the only time his voice rose.

Keogh, who recently wrote a book accusing the press of a pro-liberal, anti-Nixon bias in its coverage of the presidency, was pressed for assurances that he would not use USIA publications for domestic distribution without the express consent of the committee through special legislation.

"That will be my policy," assured Keogh, "if I am confirmed."

Fulbright complained to

Keogh of what he described as the "dismantling" of news in American public television. "They have eliminated any voice of dissent in the media," said the Arkansas Democrat.

"I think the voice of dissent," Keogh respectfully replied, "is still very, very strong in the media."

The entire confirmation rite yesterday was a mutual curtsy between the once-fierce Foreign Relations Committee and the White House.

"Nobody is going to be able to defeat these nomi-

nees," observed a Senate aide afterward.

The atmosphere of the committee room was best summed up in an exchange between Fulbright and Helms:

"Would you please state for the record what you have been doing for the past 10 or 15 years," Fulbright asked.

Helms replied that he had been employed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Well, I am glad we could finally get that on the record," said Fulbright. (Laughter).

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