

CIA 5.03.1

CIA 1.01 Bush, George

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~~Press Club~~

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NEWS JUN 14 1976

D - 50,622

S - 51,841

Editorial

CIA stooges?

George Bush, the new CIA director, apparently stayed too long in China.

On at least one point—the function of news reporters—his view is parallel to that of the Communists.

Bush took office during the height of the CIA flaps, one of which centered over use of reporters as sources for the CIA. He announced that henceforth, the CIA won't pay for such information.

Last week, he said again—no pay, but how about giving it to us for free?

Bush seems to be laboring under some misapprehension, that the question here is money, not principle.

He told the annual gathering of the Overseas Press Club in New York that journalists should volunteer information to the agency.

To the credit of the Club, only a couple of boos and a few hisses greeted that remark. From the rest, there was "stunned silence," as one member described it.

The policy of UPI and AP, the major news services, and of any reputable news agency, is to forbid volunteering information for the CIA, FBI, or any other governmental intelligence or law enforcement agency. That is basic. If this principle is tampered with, then the public will have good reason to question the news report. Reporters can't become tools of government. In China, maybe; in a democracy, never. It also is ridiculous to suggest to a group that is founded on an open society that it should participate in covert operations.

Bush left that banquet quietly, in the middle of an awards program. It was just as well.