

Letters

C.I.A. Restraints That Must Survive

To the Editor:

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's decision to delete the anti-press provisions from his pending bill "unshackling" the C.I.A. [news story Feb. 21] is a good first step toward improving that pernicious piece of legislation. But it is only a first step. The bill still contains an anti-public provision, one that would very largely exempt the C.I.A. from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

When he was our Ambassador at the United Nations, Mr. Moynihan was proud to proclaim that this society was an open one and went to suggest that this was a source of our country's strength. Today, even while conceding that he cannot point to any verifiable damage to our national security, Senator Moynihan has apparently decided that the best way to stand up to the Russians is to attempt to emulate them.

Such a strategy is as wrong as it is impractical. Assuming that it could succeed, would we wish to live in a society where it did?

In hundreds of court cases in the last five years, the C.I.A. has shown itself well capable of protecting its own interests, and Congress has wisely refused its yearly requests for any further assistance in defeating the public's right to monitor the operations of the Government.

A wholesale assault on this right today might give our politicians a temporary thrill in an election year but in the long term will only do damage to the true source of our national strength: an informed and engaged electorate.

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