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Memo on USIA

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MEMO ON USIA

The general impression is that the USIA is a supplementary arm of foreign policy. Actually, the State Department, charged with the primary responsibility of conducting our foreign affairs, has asked for 227.7 millions and the USIA has requested 144 millions. In other words the USIA states that it needs more than half as much money as the entire department -- in fact, almost 2/3 as much, actually about 63%. The State Department in administering foreign affairs asks for permanent positions for 21,496 people, the USIA for 13,420.

What is the USIA?

What is it supposed to do?

What should it do?

Is it a supplementary agency or has it grown unnoticed into the status of a department on its own?

Is a department of information necessary?

If so, what is its role?

The USIA maintains 219 ^{posts} ~~positions~~ in 82 countries; press services; motion picture services with sound tracks in 40 languages; 163 United States operated information centers and 75 more operated jointly by this country and the host country; radio broadcasts from 76 transmitters in 41 foreign languages and English.

There is no question but that there is a need for a USIA, but (1) does bigness in this field make for excellence? (2) does quantity count above quality? (3) how much deadwood is there in USIA? and (4) what of its tendency toward an entrenched bureaucracy? It has for the past several years been endeavoring to set up a permanent rating system based on the system now in effect in the State Department. The USIA does not formulate policy; it disseminates information. The time has come for a clear assessment of the USIA programs; for a clear decision as to just what its mission is; and a clear decision if possible as to what it is to become. More money will not and cannot produce more and better United States propaganda. The State Department, the NSC and the President do not consult with USIA before policy is made. The USIA carries statements once made, but it is not in on the take-off. Asking for more funds each year is not the answer, nor is it the important factor in USIA; a definition of its duties and a clear-cut course is.

USIA has no voice in the formulation of policy. It does too much work in countries friendly to us and not enough in countries either unfriendly or neutral. It would be far better to work through established papers and writers and news agencies in the countries concerned than -- as is the tendency in the USIA and other overseas operating agencies -- to add more and more people; more broadcasters, more editors and more speakers to do the job directly, rather than -- as mentioned in the previous part of this statement -- indirectly through means already available in the countries ~~concerned~~ concerned.