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LOBBYISTS FOR FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

Charges of illicit lobbying by South Korea are impelling Congress to take another look at and possibly revise the Foreign Agents Registration Act. It's too bad, however, that this investigation did not precede the passage of the annual foreign aid bill.

Now that we have passed the 30th anniversary of the Marshall Plan, the old saying that nothing is certain except death and taxes should be amended to read death, taxes, and foreign aid.

There is no grassroots enthusiasm for foreign aid. Congressmen who vote for it must constantly explain their actions to complaining constituents. Yet, the annual foreign aid bill is never in any danger of being voted down.

Where is the powerful constituency that demands foreign aid? The best explanation is that it is the agents of foreign countries who are paid big fees that come ultimately out of the tax dollars appropriated by Congress.

These lobbyists are paid thousands of dollars a month, sometimes in excess of $100,000 per year, to look after the Washington interests of their foreign government clients.

Typically, the lobbyists are Washington lawyers, frequently ex-Federal officials, sometimes public relations consultants. The work they perform may be called legal services, public relations consultancy, lobbying, political advice, or any combination thereof.

Clark M. Clifford, who was Secretary of Defense in Lyndon Johnson's Administration and now is Carter's special envoy for Cyprus, is one of the most highly-paid of foreign government agents. His firm receives an annual fee of $150,000 from the Algerian government and $160,000 from the Australian Meat Board, not counting expenses.

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Venezuela paid a group of individuals and public relations firms, including F. Clifton White, $1,369,000 in 1976. With the rise in the price of Venezuelan oil that Americans are now paying, the fee was no hardship on Venezuela.

An investigation is long overdue of the way agents for foreign governments float in and out of the service for the U.S. Government and service for foreign governments.

Article I, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution prohibits any government official from accepting any present or emolument of any kind whatsoever from any foreign state. But government officials can resign from a position of trust with our government one day, and the next day accept a lucrative fee from a foreign govern ment. Or vice versa.

Paul C. Warnke, our chief arms control negotiator, and Sol Linowitz, our chief negotiator for a new treaty with Panama, were both registered agents for foreign countries before President Carter appointed them.

The list of lobbyists for foreign governments includes many other political figures who have long records of coming down on the internationalist (as opposed to the American) side of any issue: Dean Acheson, Secretary of State in the Truman Administration; J. William Fulbright, longtime chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Charles Goodell, former liberal Senator from New York; and William P. Rogers, Secretary of State in the Nixon Administration.

The United States was once the most prosperous country in the world. Now, in average per capita income, we are behind Switzerland and Sweden. If these trends continue, we may even fall behind war-ravaged Belgium and Holland. One reason these countries are passing us in prosperity is that, unlike the United States, they do not have a large foreign giveaway program.

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