

FBI Official Warns Legion Of 'Leaks' at Defense Plants

1-11 8/28/40

Charging that United States manufacturers are being careless with valuable military information, Lee R. Pennington, assistant to the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said last night that the bureau will immediately survey some 12,000 firms expected to handle defense contracts.

Speaking before the National Cathedral Post No. 10 of the American Legion, the investigator said that already FBI agents have gone into some 300 plants for the purpose of providing protection for valuable Army and Navy plans.

Leaks Reported

He said that in several instances it had been learned that the manufacturers have been careless with secret specifications.

Some 60 members of the Cathedral post heard Pennington as he described the increase in the investigation of un-American activities by the department in the past two years.

"For five years previous to 1938," he said, "we had about 35 spy and sabotage complaints per year. There were 250 in 1938, 651 in 1939, and reports this year have already run into the thousands. We have had as many as 2,800 reports in a single day."

Co-operation Sought

Pennington urged the Legionnaires to report any suspicions they might have of Fifth Column activities to the FBI, but cau-

tioned against private investigation.

"We will do the investigating," he said, "don't play amateur detective."

He pointed out that the Department of Justice is constantly in search of the leaders of subversive interests and that there is little to be gained by frightening small fry employees.

Within the past several weeks, he said, the FBI had conferred with police officers in all sections of the nation, and all peace officers have been instructed to report to the department any suspicions.

Elwood H. Seal, corporation counsel for the District of Columbia, was among five new members taken into the National Cathedral Post at last night's meeting. Others were David A. Hart, S. J. Goldin, Leon F. Bani-gan, and Herbert J. Jacobi.