

# F. B. I. Ferreting Out Foreign Agents in 12,000 Defense Plants

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Pennington, Hoover Aide, Tells Legionnaires to Shun Vigilante Tactics

Plans for Federal Bureau of Investigation surveys of 12,000 industrial plants engaged in some phase of gearing the United States for national defense were disclosed last night by Lee R. Pennington, administrative assistant to F. B. I. Director J. Edgar Hoover.

Speaking before the National Cathedral Post of the American Legion in Reno Esther Hall, Wisconsin avenue and Wyndham place N.W., the Justice Department official told of surveys already made in about 300 American plants to eliminate foreign agents.

High ranking officials of the Army and Navy intelligence services and the State Department are working in close co-ordination with the Justice Department in this important field of plant protection, Mr. Pennington pointed out.

To illustrate the need for counter-espionage, he showed the growing number of espionage complaints received by the bureau. While the F. B. I., prior to 1938 handled only 35 such cases annually, last year saw an increase to 1,651, he said. Today as many as 2,800 complaints had been received in one day.

He stressed, however, that a large number of these were of the "crank variety" and of little value in getting at the root of subversive activities in this country.

Warning of the laxity in some plants, the speaker told of one F. B. I. agent who, removing his badge, roamed unmolested through a factory engaged in important defense production.

The Bureau of Investigation, he stressed, was anxious to avoid duplication of vigilante groups so active during the last war. To the Legionnaires, he advised they report any suspicions of subversive activity to the Washington office of the F. B. I. rather than "play amateur detective."

The post voted to membership Elwood H. Seal, corporation counsel for the District; David A. Hart, Herbert J. Jacobi and S. J. Goldin, all attorneys, and Leon F. Banigan.

Thomas R. Callahan, post commander, presided at the meeting which marked the end of the Legion's fiscal year.