

FBI Eyed Lawyer As King Substitute

NEW YORK (UPI) — FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover approved a secret 1964 proposal suggesting the bureau groom a well known New York lawyer to replace the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as head of the black civil rights movement, the New York Times reported Saturday.

The Times said top FBI officials named Samuel Pierce Jr., a Republican with no background as a civil rights activist, as the man the bureau decided to use to steer blacks "in the proper direction."

Pierce, reached by telephone in New York, told the newspaper he "didn't know anything about" the plan. He was not available for comment Saturday.

The proposal was drafted by William Sullivan, a senior FBI official, at a time when the FBI held King in disfavor and Hoover had ordered efforts to discredit him.

In his memo, Sullivan said the bureau not only should persuade the country that King was "a fraud, demagogue and scoundrel," but also should develop a leader to "assume the role of the leadership of the Negro people when King has been completely discredited," the Times said.

Sullivan wrote that a friend had given him Pierce's name and described his qualifications as "the kind of a Negro I have in

mind to advance to positions of national leadership."

Details of Sullivan's report were disclosed in a Senate Intelligence Committee report two years ago, but Pierce's name was withheld.

The Times quoted committee sources as saying Pierce's name was kept secret partly because there was no evidence the bureau ever contacted him or that he was

aware his name was considered.

There also was no evidence the FBI ever moved to carry out the plan.

Pierce, 55, is a member of the law firm of Battle, Fowler, Jaffin, Pierce and Kheel.

At the time of Sullivan's memo, he had a strong reputation as a lawyer, a criminal court judge and an official in the Treasury department.

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