

Foes of Freeway Dogged by FBI, Activist Charges

By Allan Frank

Washington Star Staff Writer

Reginald H. Booker, a 35-year-old local activist who once was well known for leading anti-freeway protests, has learned from files released under the Freedom of Information Act, he says, that the FBI once took great interest in highway opponents.

Booker — a co-plaintiff in the U.S. District Court suit filed last July by the late Julius Hobson, seven other activists and three protest groups against former Metropolitan Police Chief Jerry Wilson and various other police and FBI officials — believes the files he and fellow activist Sammie A. Abbott received provide at least a hint of the extent of the police and federal activities against activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

So far, with the case still being litigated, the FBI has declined to provide numerous documents to the plaintiffs. The files received by Booker under the Freedom of Information Act contain numerous deletions of names of informants and agents the plaintiffs want the FBI and police to identify. The suit by Hobson and his co-defendants seeks damages for alleged violations of their First, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights.

THE FILES DO demonstrate that the FBI kept a close watch on the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis, a group led by Booker which successfully fought construction of the Three Sisters Bridge.

Agents or informants present at ECTC meetings at George Washington University, City Council chambers, outside the District Building, at 14th and U Streets NW and at the Three Sisters Bridge construction site in Georgetown carefully noted the racial makeup of each group.

The Rockefeller Commission report on CIA activities also noted that a group of four persons led by Booker in 1967 called Niggers, Inc. was one of the protest groups targeted for surveillance by agents in Operation Chaos, a widespread effort to keep track of protesters.

Included in the files is a transcript of a speech Booker gave at George Washington University Oct. 22, 1969. Booker began, "Before we get started . . . I would like to acknowledge the presence of FBI agents and undercover people . . . Report back to the Nixon people that the bridge will be smashed."

BOOKER SAID TTE FILES do not make any mention of several attempts FBI agents made to interview him or of interviews they had with friends and associates of his. Booker claimed that several of his girlfriends were questioned about his sexual proclivities and that some of his friends began shunning him after they were interviewed by the FBI.

Now employed in the training section of the District's Department of Human Resources, Booker also believes that FBI agents made it difficult for him to get a job or a decent credit rating several years ago but the files contain no mention of any such activity.

Documents filed by the defense in the District Court suit list May 1968 through April 1972 as the main period during which Booker's activities were being noted by the FBI. He was listed in the FBI's "agitator index" and the "rabble-rouser index."

In addition to asserting that the suit is invalid for various reasons, the defendants contend that any surveillance activities conducted were within the scope of their official duties.

The FBI declined to comment on the files because the case is being litigated.