

FBI Wheat Deal Coverup Charged

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By Nick Kotz

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Rep. John Melcher (D-Mont.) said yesterday that his request to the FBI for information concerning possible mishandling of the Soviet wheat deal resulted instead in his being interrogated by the FBI.

At issue was Melcher's complaint that the FBI and Justice Department are refusing to make public information that might embarrass the Nixon administration.

Melcher said he was told the FBI had taken a statement from a Continental Grain Co. official which indicated the Nixon administration had misled the public on the giant wheat sale to Russia. The statement allegedly is that the

government was informed about the sale beforehand.

If this is true, the administration failed to properly inform the public about changes in the market supply and demand situation. The administration claims the huge Soviet wheat purchases took the U.S. government by surprise.

After Melcher complained publicly about the FBI refusing to make its information public, the congressman said he received a call Wednesday from the FBI requesting a meeting.

"I was really encouraged," said Melcher. "I thought they finally were going to come across with some information."

When agents Nicholas Wulich and George Fisher came to his office Thursday morning, Melcher said, "To my surprise, I discovered that the purpose of their visit was to try to find out who I had talked with at the Continental Grain Co.

"I now think the only reason they came around was to check out how much I knew that might haunt them if they ever put out a report absolving everybody."

"I asked who had sent them to see me," Melcher said, "and they said they didn't know."

With the agents in his office, Melcher called Assistant Attorney General Henry Pe-

tersen, from whom he has been trying to get information on the wheat deal for several months.

Petersen said he didn't send the agents, but also again declined to be helpful, Melcher said.

An FBI spokesman said it is never the practice of the FBI to give investigative information to members of Congress. If a statement was taken from a Continental official, he said, then the FBI would turn the information over to the Justice Department.

Melcher said didn't supply the FBI with any information either. "They've already got the information I want," he said.