

Leftists Deny Bomb Plot Outlined By FBI's Hoover

FPost
12/1/78

WASHINGTON (AP) — An antiwar group of Roman Catholic priests, nuns and laymen denied Monday plotting a kidnap and other accusations by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, and accused him of trying to set the stage for more pressure on leftist groups.

The eleven members of the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives said a law suit for defamation of character or libel is being considered.

Hoover, testifying before a Senate appropriations subcommittee last Friday, said the group was plotting to disrupt capital utility lines and kidnap an unidentified White House official. Ransom would be an end to bombing in Indochina and release of "political prisoners," he said.

Hoover said the principal leaders of the group were brothers Daniel and Philip Berrigan, two priests presently serving sentences in a federal prison at Danbury, Conn.

The Berrigans issued a statement earlier denying Hoover's assertion and saying he should "either . . . prosecute us or publicly retract the charges he made."

A Jesuit priest, Peter Ford, 32, Jersey City, N.J., said in the Monday news conference many of the members know the Berri-

gans socially and through church work, but that there is no connection whatsoever between the group and the priests.

Dominican Sister Susan Cordes, 32, said Hoover may have them confused with other antiwar groups. However that may be, she said she would welcome any official investigation which she hopes "would uncover what is happening in this country."

Categorically denying everything, inner city priest, Father Joe Wenderoth, 34, said about such plotting: "our philosophy and our tactics would not allow it."

Why the accusations?
"I hope this is far-fetched,"

Fordi said, but Hoover may have been trying "to induce the public to believe all groups acting to counter the status quo are subversive, careless of human life, and not careful of the commandments of human life."

Also, Ford said, "just the forum he used indicates he is trying to create a need for greater surveillance by the FBI for all kinds of leftist groups . . . He wants to make the FBI a perpetual part of American life." Hoover was asking the committee to approve increased FBI funding.

"We are a militant group, but a militant group respecting human life, taking every precaution known," Ford said.