

Indiana Is Asking Federal Funds for Informer Network

By Margaret Gentry
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS, Dec. 31—

Indiana is seeking federal financing of a planned program of neighborhood police informers which a top state official admitted could become a neighborhood spy network.

The plan drafted by the Indiana Criminal Justice Planning Agency (CJPA) calls for hiring of "rumor control monitors" in three or four unnamed major cities.

CJPA director William Greeman was asked, during a tape-recorded interview with John Garrett of Indianapolis TV station WTTV, whether the plans could lead to a spy network.

"That's what it could amount to," Greeman replied, "We might not be able to trust our neighbors after a while. But as long as we're not doing anything wrong, we shouldn't have to worry, I don't suppose."

But State Police Supt. Robert K. Konkle said the monitors could in no way infringe upon the citizens' right to privacy.

The monitor plan is part of a 41-section 1971 crime fighting program the Indiana agency plans to present to the Justice Department in Washington seeking \$8.6 million in federal funding.

A total of \$12,000 will be asked to partially finance hiring of the rumor monitors during 1971. The plan calls for each participating city to pay 40 per cent of the monitor costs, with federal funds making up the balance.

Asked whether the rumor monitors could investigate students involved in political dissent, Greeman said, "It isn't contemplated" but it would be possible.

He said the informers' pri-

mary duty would be to notify police of suspected activities of organized crime and report Indianapolis on Wednesday and was not immediately available for further comment.

Two Indiana legislative leaders said Wednesday the proposals described in the state plan sets a "dangerous precedent."

House Speaker Otis R. Bowen, R-Bremen, and House Minority Leader Richard C. Bodine, D-Mishawaka said they believed public exposure "will squelch any further action" that would leave loopholes for development of a spy system.

Bodine said the idea smacks of "Nazi Germany in 1937 and the Salem witchcraft trials." He said the legislature should act to prohibit any spying activities linked to the rumor monitors' duties if the project won't have federal approval.

Bowen said the proposals, as outlined in the state plan, are dangerous because they contain no controls to prevent monitors from irresponsible spying.

The plan to be submitted to federal officials says of the rumor monitors:

"Individuals who know their neighborhoods well will be hired and will report to city officials possible dangerous situations as well as refute rumors in event of civil disorders."

Konkle said such information would provide police a basis for dispelling false ru-

mors as well as verifying true reports.

Konkle said the proposed rumor monitors and existing police intelligence operations would "not engage in, to any degree whatsoever" investigations that might be considered political harassment.

Konkle was asked whether a rumor control monitor who attended a party and heard a conversation he considered "Subversive" would be expected to report that conversation to police.

He said, "Yes."

In Fort Wayne, Capt. Robert Hatfield said city police hired 12 young people last summer as rumor control monitors. Most were college students who returned to school in the fall, but three remain on the payroll at \$2.50 an hour, he said.

The monitors were asked to circulate throughout the city at gatherings of other young people, Hatfield said.

They acted mainly to relay information from police to the community, sometimes clarifying rumors of police brutality, he added.

Asked whether the monitors conduct undercover intelligence work, Hatfield said, "We didn't ask them to."