

Burns Defends Asking FBI to Probe Fed Leak

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Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur F. Burns invoked the Ten Commandments yesterday to explain why he asked the FBI to find out who in his agency leaked a list of bank interest rates to a magazine. "I was brought up to respect the Ten Commandments and the Eighth Commandment is, 'Thou shalt not steal,'" Burns told a House Govern-

Burns said to protect the Federal Reserve Board's integrity he had to find out who engaged in "the apparent theft of government property" and gave the figures to Consumers Union, which published the in its March issue of Consumer Reports.

"If I have a dishonest em-

ployee in my shop I want to track him down," Burns said. Members accused Burns of overreacting. They said the Justice Department sent in the FBI without determining whether a crime actually had been committed.

The information Consumer Reports published is the interest charged by big banks in 11 cities for auto, consumer and personal loans.

Burns said it was irrelevant that the data are available to anyone who walks into the banks and asks. He said the Federal Reserve had gathered it on the promise of confidentiality.

Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal (D-N.Y.), the subcommittee chairman, said he suspected Burns called in the FBI to in-

timidate the magazine into not publishing the data, or as not to embarrass the agency that charge the most.

The Justice Department said the FBI has expended 80 agent manhours in the investigation so far.