

Ex-D.C. Teacher 'Surprised' At FBI Bid to Get Her Fired

By J. Y. Smith

Washington Post Staff Writer

Maude Wilkinson, 29, is petite and gentle-voiced—the kind of teacher who can catch the fancy of kids.

She also caught the fancy of the FBI.

In 1969, the agency's Washington field office sent an anonymous letter to Dr. William R. Manning, then the D.C. school superintendent, suggesting that she be fired because she was a member of a socialist youth group and because she was living with a man she wasn't married to.

As far as Mrs. Wilkinson knows, Manning took no action. She worked in a Head Start program that summer and she was rehired by the school system the following fall.

In fact, Mrs. Wilkinson, who in 1969 was Maude Adams White, daughter of a Methodist minister, did not know the FBI was trying to get her fired until last Saturday, when she received a telephone call from the Political Rights Defense Fund in New York.

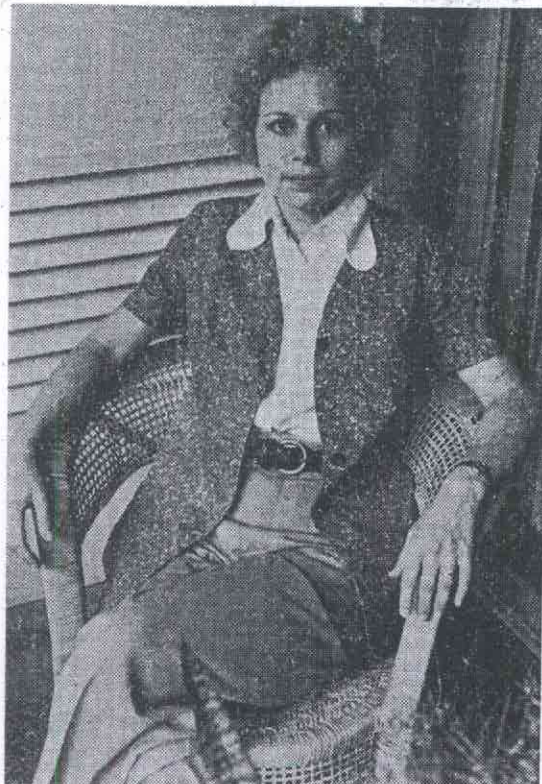
The group is suing the government for \$27 million on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party for alleged illegal surveillance of its members. Documents detailing FBI action against her, including the anonymous letter, came to light as a result of the court proceedings.

"I was surprised," Mrs. Wilkinson said in her apartment in Alexandria yesterday. She paused and then added:

"I feel lucky I wasn't fired and I'm glad the Socialist Workers Party had this suit, so I could find out about it."

An FBI spokesman declined to comment on the matter because it is in litigation.

Mrs. Wilkinson came un-



By Ellsworth Davis—The Washington Post

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der FBI surveillance during the bureau's counterintelligence activities against left and right-wing groups that began on May 9, 1968, and ended April 28, 1971. The activities were called Cointelpro.

Despite statements by FBI Director Clarence M. Kelly that all Cointelpro activities have ceased, Socialist Workers Party officials contend that their organization and its members still are being harassed.

The anonymous letter the

FBI sent to Manning about Mrs. Wilkinson said the writer was acting "in order to protect the D.C. school system from the menace of a teacher who does not have the interests of the children or the country at heart."

A memorandum from FBI headquarters to the Washington field office authorizing the anonymous letter directed the local agents "to take all steps necessary to protect the identity of the bureau as the source."

At the time, Mrs. Wilkin-

son (then Miss White) was teaching preschoolers at Maury Elementary School, Tennessee and Constitution Avenues NE.

"Of course, those kids were four years old, and we never discussed politics or anything like that," Mrs. Wilkinson said yesterday.

She has been teaching children with learning disabilities at Cunningham Park Elementary School in Fairfax County for the past two years. She said she dropped out of the Socialist Workers Party in the fall of 1971.

She was just beginning her work with the learning-disabled that it took so much of her time and attention that she had to drop political activities.

She said she first got involved in the SWP when she joined the Young Socialist Alliance, its youth affiliate, while an undergraduate at American University in 1968.

Mrs. Wilkinson said she was attracted to the group because of her opposition to the war in Vietnam and because of her interest in socialism.

She said the SWP argued that "the whole military budget should be disbanded and the money put into hospitals and schools, and I thought that was correct."

"Of course, being a teacher, especially in the D.C. schools, I saw how rotten the schools were, how much money was spent on war and how little on education," Mrs. Wilkinson said.

Now, she said, she occasionally goes to a party meeting with her husband, Robert, whom she married three years ago and whom she met in the party.

But that, she said, is the extent of her political activity.