

# Stanley Branche Denies Charge He Was an Informant for FBI

By HOWARD S. SHAPIRO  
*Of The Inquirer Staff*

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Former civil rights fire-brand Stanley E. Branche flatly denied on Sunday allegations that he had been a confidential informant for the FBI.

The charges were made by the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI, the group distributing files allegedly stolen from an FBI office in Media on March 8. The Commission made the charges in a cover letter accompanying the latest packet of files.

Branche, of Devon, was formerly chairman of the Chester Committee for Freedom Now and former executive director of the Philadelphia Black Coalition and the Greater Chester Movement.

## SENT TO PAPER

The alleged FBI files, sent to The Inquirer and other selected newspapers this weekend and bearing a Detroit postmark, reported that Branche was questioned on May 20, 1970, by the FBI and "advised he did not know" a certain individual "and he could furnish no information about him."

"The FBI would call dif-



STANLEY BRANCHE  
... blasts Hoover

ferent people about different things pertaining to the civil rights movement," Branche said in answering the charges. "They would come to our civil rights offices periodically and ask what we had planned. So did other agencies, like the civil disobedience squad.

"If we were going to march, I would tell them we were going to march. But sometimes, they'd call and ask, 'Do you know Joe Jones?' for

instance, and I'd say, 'Listen, pal, don't call us with this stuff.'"

## CODE LETTERS

FBI code letters "POI" appear in front of Branche's name in the documents, but are undefined. Branche said he had no idea what the code meant. In the other portions of the document, his political history is sketched.

Branche was unaware that such files were released, along with the committee's charges, when he was contacted by a reporter.

"I don't like what the FBI's doing (in its files)," he said. "I said many times I think J. Edgar Hoover's a senile old buzzard, and the Philadelphia division (of the FBI), doing all this . . . , is worse than any demonstrator could be.

"I am really not concerned how long they've followed me, because I have done nothing to be ashamed of in the civil rights movement."

## JAIL RECORD

Branche countered the Citizens' Commission's charge that the documents help to explain why Branche is not in jail for civil rights activities. He cited his jail record and said: "I've gone to jail over 100 times — but not for sticking a pistol in my pocket and saying, 'This is The movement.' I'm not ashamed of anything I've ever gone to jail for."

The commission also claimed the documents helped explain Branche's verbal attack

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# Branche Is Called Informant by Group Investigating FBI

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on "black activists who formerly worked with him," probably referring to Branche's opposition to Muhammed Kenyatta, of the Black Economic Development Conference.

Kenyatta's group has demanded reparations from church groups for damages inflicted on blacks throughout America's history.

"I still don't believe in knocking on a door and throwing the sacraments on the floor," Branche said Sunday. "That's why I was opposed to the whole thing."

## NAME IN FILES

He added there was "no doubt in my mind" that his name is in scores of files dealing with civil rights groups in the 1960's. "They (the FBI agents) have trailed me, followed me, tapped my phone. But if they have me down as a paid informer, they'll have to prove it."

Branche speculated that the group involved in stealing the FBI files were the persons "I chased out of Chester years before. Because of what they have said, doesn't mean I have to prove something to them. I do not condone them and they do not lead me. And they know that (their actions) isn't my kind of schtick."



JAMES GORBEY

... backed by Branche

Branche said he was presently unemployed. He recently sold his portion of ownership in the plush Rolls Royce Club, a center city restaurant and bar.

Among his best friends are Major Coxson, flamboyant black entrepreneur, who was a partner with Branche in their Rolls Royce venture.

## NO MOVEMENT

During the last two years, he has not been active with civil rights organizers. He explained this Sunday by saying there is no more civil rights movement.

"We don't have a concerted effort to fight these problems, like housing, jobs and education, anymore. That stopped when all the Federal funds came down the line. Somebody's going to have to come up with a new approach, and when they do, I'll be the first to participate."

The Citizens' Commission also charged that what they claimed were alleged FBI ties showed why Branche supported former Chester Mayor James H. Gorbey for a Federal judgeship. Gorbey had been mayor during the early 60s, when violence occasionally swept Chester's streets during demonstrations.

"I backed him (Gorbey) simply because he had demonstrated compassion as a judge in Delaware County, wherein 60 percent of the people who came before him were black," Branche said. "I'd rather have somebody there that we know, than somebody we don't know."

Branche, who recently moved to Devon from Chester, has four children: Mark, 10; Stanley Jr., 5; Wilma, 4, and Alexander, 2. He and his wife, Anna, are both 37.

His brother, Gilbert, is assistant chief of county detectives under the office of the Philadelphia District Attorney.

#### DEFUNCT UNIT

Branche, a powerful orator, became well-known in Chester in 1962 when he took over the weak NAACP there. From his street marches, Chester became a leader in northern racial unrest. After a falling-out with several NAACP members, he began the now-defunct Committee for Freedom Now.

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During the 60s, when he was in the civil rights forefront, Branche held seminars for law enforcers on the need for civil rights' activities. He was a leader of many protests, a number of them against the Chester School District.

In 1967, Branche sought the Democratic candidacy in Chester's mayoral race, but was knocked out of the primary when a court found his petition to be fraudulent.

He was a controversial director of the Black Coalition, a self-help job and business organization which lasted a year during 1968-69. He resigned from his post shortly before the debt-ridden coalition was dissolved.

Shortly after that, he faded from the civil rights scene.