

1,616 informers SEP 5 1976

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FBI admits it spied on leftists

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — Federal Bureau of Investigation officials said in court papers made available yesterday they had used 1,616 part-time informers to spy on the Socialist Workers Party since 1960.

Special FBI agent Martin Lauer said in a sworn deposition in a \$40-million civil suit filed by the party against the government that the bureau has used 66 informers this year alone against the Socialist Workers. The documents do not reveal what threat the left-wing party poses and no party members have been charged with any crimes.

The latest revelations, following an FBI admission last March that agents burglarized the Socialist Workers Party headquarters in New York 90 times between 1960 and 1966, showed a massive FBI campaign costing millions of dollars against a small political party which numbers about 2,500 members.

Sylvia Weinstein, San Francisco SWP leader and Board of Education candidate, said yesterday the revelations were no surprise to her or local party members.

"It's not new. The American people should be outraged, however, by this infringement on our democratic rights."

Weinstein, a member of the party since the 1940s, said she felt the FBI began its spying and burglarizing of the party during that decade. The campaign included gossip aimed at breaking up marriages or costing party members their jobs, she said.

She said party members who reveal themselves as taking part in the FBI campaign would "not be prosecuted by us." But those who conceal their role, she said, will be sued by the party.

The FBI said 316 of the 1,616 informers posed as party members. Some served on local or national executive committees of the party. Most of the spies, however, were termed "free floating" — meaning the Socialist Workers were just one of a number of groups they watched.

The late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover termed the use of informers to infiltrate and disrupt such groups as the Communist party and the Ku Klux Klan as among the finer achievements of bureau domestic intelligence operations. Hoover accused these groups of advocating or using violence.

There was no indication in any FBI documents made public that the Socialist Workers advocated or used violence.

The records show, however, that FBI informers burglarized party offices within the last three years. (FBI Director Clarence Kelley has barred domestic intelligence burglaries by agents and says the same rules apply to informers.)

Justice Department sources recently disclosed that it had burglarized the Denver party offices as late as last July 7. The department is investigating the case as part of a probe of more than 30 FBI agents who allegedly burglarized the homes or offices of Weather Underground supporters in 1972 and 1973.