

Rep. Anderson Assails Hoover For Accusations Against Berrigans

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By Richard L. Lyons
Washington Post Staff Writer

Late Wednesday evening, Rep. William R. Anderson (D-Tenn.), soft-spoken former Naval officer, arose in the House to deliver the sharpest criticism of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover ever heard there.

Anderson branded as "tactics reminiscent of McCarthyism" Hoover's Senate testimony last month that Philip and Daniel Berrigan, the Catholic priest brothers imprisoned for destroying draft records, are "the principal leaders" of a plot to kidnap a high government official as an antiwar act. Anderson, who knows the Berrigans, said he didn't believe the allegation.

The congressman, who commanded the Nautilus in the first submarine voyage under the polar icecap, never got to finish his speech. His mention of the late communist-hunting Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy provoked a 30-minute quorum call and after that Anderson agreed simply to insert the rest of his

address in the Congressional Record, so the House could take a final vote on the railroad strike bill.

Anderson said he first learned of the Berrigans through their writings, then was introduced to them at the federal prison in Danbury, Conn., by a mutual friend. He visited them three times, once after Hoover made his charges, and then wrote Hoover questioning his allegation. Anderson said he received a reply from Hoover saying his statement was the result of "careful investigation" which was being transmitted to the Justice Department.

"As a lifelong admirer of Mr. Hoover," Anderson told the House, "I am convinced that he would not purposely subvert the Constitution . . . yet it is manifest that (at the Senate hearing) he did so. The divisions within our nation, the fear and repression so common in today's society has taken, we must conclude, another victim—the sense of

fairness, the honorable ethics of justice that the FBI director has always held so high."

Anderson said either Hoover should apologize or prosecution of the Berrigans should begin promptly. "Barring one of the two," he said, "we can only conclude that Director Hoover is, unwittingly I surely hope, involved in a process destructive of the institution he has loved and served with such loyal dedication. If his actions stem from such a degree of rage or fear that his purpose is to discredit all who peaceably and without violence oppose the Vietnam war, then I must conclude with much sadness, that he, too, is a victim of that war."

Anderson also said the Berrigans have been subjected to harassment while in prison. He said Philip Berrigan was placed in solitary confinement at Lewisburg Penitentiary in Pennsylvania for "offering spiritual counsel to a fellow prisoner and seeking opportunities to perform religious services."