

F.B.I. ACCUSED OF CHECKING WAR FOES' BANK FILES

by Arnold H. Lubasch

The Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee has filed a suit in Federal Court charging that the Federal Bureau of Investigation used confidential bank records to obtain information about opponents of the war in Indochina.

The suit contends that the Amalgamated Bank of New York allowed F.B.I. agents to examine the committee's checking account to identify individuals who had purchased tickets for transportation to Washington for the Moratorium Day demonstration last November.

The charge was denied yesterday by the bank's president, Maxwell Brandwen, who said that "we did not make any such information available to the F.B.I."

A spokesman for the F.B.I. here said last night that it had no comment on the charge.

Bank Group Cites Policy

A spokesman for the American Bankers Association said that he knew of no law prohibiting banks from providing information, but he said that banks maintained "a very, very strong policy of keeping information confidential."

A lawyer for the peace committee, Arthur I. Weinstein of the firm of Golenbock & Barell, said that the committee's charge was based on information from "a source within the bank" and that the suit was "an attempt to defeat the computer."

"We are trying to determine," he said, "what rights the Government has in the collection of data about the lawful and peaceful activities of individuals."

The suit contends that compilation of the bank data by the F.B.I. violated constitutional rights dealing with freedom of speech, assembly, petition and privacy.

It adds that the collection of the information by the F.B.I. placed the plaintiffs "in fear of repressive and retaliatory acts by agencies of the United States Government."

The suit requests a court order to compel the F.B.I. to surrender the information it allegedly obtained in violation of constitutional rights and to prevent the F.B.I. from using the information any way.