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No Promise

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FBI's Stand on Political Probes

Washington

FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley yesterday refused, despite repeated prodding by House members, to promise that he would under no circumstances, revive the secret bureau programs conducted in the 1960s to disrupt activist political groups.

Kelley, under questioning by members of the House Judiciary subcommittee on constitutional rights, would only go so far as to say he would not revive the "COINTELPRO" activity, instituted by J. Edgar Hoover, without prior approval of the Attorney General.

Other Justice Department officials were on hand but the questioning focused on Kelley because of his prepared statement last Monday that defended COINTELPRO despite a finding of a Justice Department committee that it included activities that are reprehensible in a free society.

COINTELPRO included an active FBI role in surveillance, infiltration and

planned disruption of domestic political groups by defaming them and their leaders — sometimes with forged materials; sometimes with secret investigative information.

The avowed purpose was to disorganize and discredit the groups. Targets ranged from violence-oriented leftist and black extremists to the Urban League and the National Student Association.

Kelley said he has concluded some of the disruptive activities were "improper" violations of constitutional rights of the members of the targeted organizations but refused to say he would not favor reviving COINTELPRO programs if circumstances warranted.

"If I see any extraordinary situation in which extraordinary moves are needed to counteract it, I would present it to the Department of Justice," Kelley said.

At this point Representative Robert Drinan (Dem.-Mass.) said. "I think we would be happy if Mr. Kelley would say he would not do it even if the attorney general gave in to him."

Kelley remained silent.

United Press