

Cointelpro Taint

The predicament in which Associate F.B.I. Director Richard Held finds himself sheds a great deal of light on the general predicament of the F.B.I. these days and on the monumental task the bureau's Director Clarence M. Kelley faces in trying to clean up the mess that has piled up over the years.

Mr. Kelley forced the resignation of Nicholas Callahan, former Associate Director, because of information not yet made public, which surfaced in one of the numerous current investigations of the F.B.I. But, shortly after Mr. Held stepped in as Mr. Callahan's replacement in the number two job, it developed that when he served in Minneapolis Mr. Held was involved in such disruptive counterintelligence (Cointelpro) activities as spreading anonymously derogatory information about University of Minnesota students.

Mr. Kelley has stated that Cointelpro is a thing of the past which has been "purged" from bureau operations, but events conspire to contradict him. Early last month, for example, the F.B.I. withheld for two weeks from Denver police information about yet another Socialist Workers Party burglary carried out by one of its informants. And then, the Held appointment. Mr. Held's career seems not to have been impeded by his Cointelpro activities. On the contrary, his promotion may send the troops a message that perhaps Mr. Kelley doesn't think Cointelpro was all that bad after all.

Or maybe Cointelpro was so pervasive that Mr. Kelley just can't find a former Special Agent in Charge who was not involved in surreptitious programs designed to undermine the lives and the rights of selected American citizens. One thing that is clear is that Mr. Kelley's "purge" has not yet become exhaustive.