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Unitarians Fight Subpoena of Records

BOSTON, Jan. 11 (AP) — The Unitarian Universalist Association, accusing the Federal Government of invading its right to religious liberty, asked a United States District Court today to block a grand jury subpoena of its financial records in connection with the so-called Pentagon papers case. Beacon Press, the publishing arm of the association, published last fall a four-volume edition of the Pentagon study as provided to it by Senator Mike Gravel, Democrat of Alaska.

Announcing the request for a temporary restraining order to block the subpoena, Dr. Robert N. West, president of the association, said the Government's inquiry "strikes at the

heart of religious freedom in our land."

He said that the subpoena issued yesterday called for the production of all the association's records at the New England Merchants National Bank, at which the religious group keeps its accounts.

The subpoena "calls for copies of all our financial records at the bank—including all contributions made to our denomination as well as all checks which we wrote — from June 1 to Oct. 15, 1971," Dr. West said.

"The threat to freedom of association and religious liberty is obvious," he said. "If publication of a controversial book can subject our entire denomination to such an investigation, then what denomination is next?"

"We have nothing to hide.

But we are compelled to resist this unwarranted intrusion by Government into membership and financial records of a religious denomination."

He said the government investigation, if permitted to continue, would have a "chilling effect" on the religious activities of the association and "could lead to the end of religious freedom as we have known it."

"I fully expect," Dr. West said, "to get strong support from leaders of other faiths for the stand we have taken today."

A spokesman said later a hearing on the association's petition for a restraining order and temporary injunction was scheduled for Jan. 17 before Judge Andrew A. Caffrey in the district court.