

'Bible Belt' Congressman Defends Priests

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — When FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover recently accused two jailed, anti-war Roman Catholic Priests of leading a plot to kidnap a government official, the expected outcry from congressional liberals failed to materialize.

But hostile reaction came swiftly from what offhand might seem the least likely of sources — a Southern congressman from a conservative, rural district of Tennessee where Roman Catholic voters are few, Bible Belt sentiment is strong and respect for the FBI chief intense.

House colleagues have come to expect such surprises from Rep. William R. Anderson (D-Tenn.).

A decorated World War II combat veteran and former commander of the first atomic submarine, the USS Nautilus, Anderson was regarded as a hawk on the Vietnam war until recently.

Acknowledged Risk

Anderson, 49, a soft-spoken, freckled man with graying hair, acknowledges that his latest sally, involving such a popular figure as Hoover, is a political risk.

"But the time has come to draw the line and take some risks," he said. "If we don't reverse some of the directions we are going in, I can win a thousand elections and it won't do any good.

"Many members of this House have a great fear of Mr. Hoover and the FBI. I simply do not believe in government by fear. That's what this country is all about — people trying to escape repression and government by fear founded it."

Didn't Bring Charges

Anderson's quarrel with Hoover is that the FBI chief accused the Revs. Philip and Daniel Berrigan of a crime without having brought charges against them. In a recent House speech, he accused Hoover of subverting the Constitution and resort-



WILLIAM ANDERSON
"Time to take risks"



J. EDGAR HOOVER
Accused priests

ing to "tactics reminiscent of McCarthyism." But we praised Hoover's long service and suggested Congress should strike a special medal in his honor when he retires.

Anderson's concern over the Berrigan case is heightened by the fact he had become a friend of the two brothers, who are serving federal prison terms for destroying draft board records in Maryland in 1968 to protest the war.

Anderson, who came back from a Vietnam visit last July convinced that U.S. involvement there was a mistake, began reading all the books he could find about Vietnam — among them a book by the Berrigans opposing the war.

Met Through Friend

Then he met them through a mutual friend. A Church of Christ member himself, Anderson has visited the Berrigans in prison and, although he says he does not approve of their destroying draft records, he admires their conviction and does not believe they have taken part in any kidnap plot.

Anderson said his own convictions about Vietnam were formed by his visit there, although he began to have doubts about the U.S. role as far back as 1965.

During his visit, he and Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins

(D-Calif.) uncovered the since widely publicized existence of so-called "tiger cages" for political prisoners at South Vietnam's Con Son prison, but that was only one incident that influenced his thinking.

No Gratitude

More importantly, Anderson said, he found South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu too inclined to dismiss American sacrifices in men and money, ordinary Vietnamese without gratitude because they were unable to understand why Americans were there.

"I came back convinced we should extricate ourselves as soon as possible — hopefully through negotiations, if not by facing realities," he said. He made clear that he meant letting the Saigon government fall to communism rather than have this country involved indefinitely.

"The problems there are problems only Vietnamese can solve," he said.

Although Tennessee is often painted as a hawkish state, and Sen. Albert Gore's recent election defeat has been ascribed to his anti-war views, Anderson feels his own war views are not unpopular at home. He won a fourth term in November with 82 percent of the vote.

"There's been a considerable change in Tennessee from, say, three years ago," he commented.

He believes the war was not a significant factor in Gore's defeat.

Favorable Mail

Anderson said he has had little mail from home on his criticism of Hoover, but quite a bit from the country generally — and it is running about 70 percent in his favor.

That, said Anderson, has strengthened his conviction about the basic direction in

which the country is moving, despite its problems.

"I can't think of a more serious problem than that of restoring a constitutional, humble, candid, open relationship between the government and people," he said. "I'll be accused of partisan-

ship for saying this, but a poll which showed the American people didn't react very well to scare tactics and intemperate statements in the recent campaign is the best news I've seen in a long time about where the country is going."