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Hoover Defends Inquiry by F.B.I. at Wesleyan

Sends Sharp Reply to Protest by Student Committee

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MIDDLETOWN, Conn., May 4—The members of the student government of Wesleyan University, who last month protested an attempt by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to obtain the membership list of the campus chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society, have received a stinging reply from J. Edgar Hoover.

In a letter to the Wesleyan College Body Committee, published in the current edition of the college's semiweekly newspaper, The Wesleyan Argus, Mr. Hoover defended the investigation and termed the contents of a letter sent to him by the committee "utterly false" and "irresponsible."

Attacked Role in Vietnam

The student governing body's protest grew out of an incident last month in which Stanley Idzerda, dean of the college, said an F.B.I. agent had asked him for names of all students in the college's Students for a Democratic Society chapter. Mr. Idzerda said the college kept no such lists and "we consider the student's activity his own affair."

The organization, which has attacked the United States' role in the Vietnam war and has sold guides on how to claim conscientious objector status in the draft, is reputed to have almost



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J. Edgar Hoover

200 chapters with about 5,000 members.

In his letter, Mr. Hoover said:

"The Attorney General (Nicholas deB. Katzenbach) stated publicly in October, 1965, that he had instructed the F.B.I. to determine the extent of Communist infiltration into the Students for a Democratic Society, which was establishing chapters throughout the United States.

"This was the purpose of our contact with an official of Wesleyan University, and at no time

Agency Sought Membership List of Antiwar Group

was any attempt made to intimidate any students or official of the university. To say so is a misrepresentation of the truth of the matter."

The letter went on to say:

"Your statement that the 'F.B.I. investigation is extremely hostile to the goal of academic freedom' is not only utterly false but also is so irresponsible as to cast serious doubt on the quality of academic reasoning or the motivation behind it."

Cites Duties of F.B.I.

Mr. Hoover noted that the bureau was responsible for investigating activities of individuals and organizations under laws enacted by Congress, by Presidential directives and under instructions from the Attorney General.

"These investigations are initiated in a straight-forward manner without apology to anyone and are conducted objectively truthfully and impartially to determine the facts," the F.B.I. director wrote.

"An F.B.I. investigation of certain members of an organization is not a judgment but a gathering of facts, to be studied by duly constituted legal authorities," Mr. Hoover declared.

"In performing its duties, the F.B.I. has not and will not exceed its authority; neither will it shirk its responsibilities."