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F.B.I. File Theft Stirs Rage and Joy

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MEDIA, Pa., March 26—Too small to be incorporated as a city, this residential borough of 6,300 population some 10 miles southwest of Philadelphia is not too small to have a three-room suite of offices for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

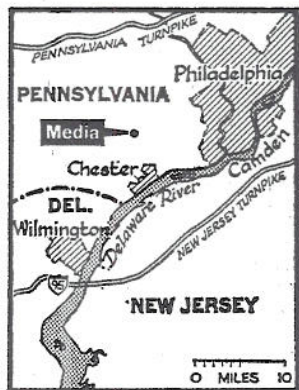
The office files held about 1,000 documents until they were stolen March 8 by the self-styled and still unapprehended Citizens Commission to Investigate the F.B.I.

The theft and subsequent distribution of copies of 14 of the documents for the stated purpose of exposing the extensiveness of the bureau's surveillance over citizens has produced sharply differing reactions among Media residents.

They range from joy at the daring of the exploit to anger that anyone would presume to tamper with the F.B.I. Between these extremes is a considerable segment of the populace that is apathetic.

"I saw something about it in the paper and it's been on my mind to read it," said a woman office employee, "but I haven't had time."

"Most people didn't even know the F.B.I. was here," said Mrs. Charles Cassidy, a housewife. "I didn't know it." She



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has lived in Media a quarter of a century.

"People here see the burglary as harassment of the F.B.I.," said James J. Loughran, borough secretary. "They think it's a shame."

More outspoken were representatives of several veterans groups.

"People are shocked that anyone would have the nerve to fool around with the F.B.I.," said Carl E. Mau, organizer of a group of veterans who give draftees monthly send-offs.

The bureau has field offices in major cities. There are two in Pennsylvania—in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Each field office serves as a focal point for outlying "resident agencies."

There are about 500 of these, and the Media office is one.

The bureau apparently moved agents to Media from Chester, Delaware County's largest city, four years ago, presumably because Media is more centrally situated for covering the county. Delaware County residents discovered that earlier, moving the county seat from Chester to Media in 1850.

Not all Media residents believe the bureau moved into Media solely because it is a centrally located county seat. Some say the move was prompted by a desire to keep a closer eye on antiwar activities here. Agents in Media and at the regional headquarters in Philadelphia refused to specify when the Media office was opened or state what other branch offices were in the Philadelphia area.

A prime mover in antiwar demonstrations and a draft counseling service is the Street Messenger Community Project, which was organized following the Cambodia incursion last

Among 6,300 Residents of Media, Pa.

year. It has headquarters in the Fellowship House, which was started in 1944 to promote interracial brotherhood.

Among peace activists working with the project is Robert L. Anthony, an art therapist who teaches disturbed teenagers.

"I am opposed to the F.B.I. spying on people," Mr. Anthony said in an interview at his home in nearby Moylan.

The lay psychotherapist, who has been arrested twice in demonstrations in Media, said he saw great value in exposing such activity. But he emphasized that he opposed any form of "sabotage" as a peace tactic because it "brings repression on everybody."

Mr. Anthony is one of some 500 Quakers affiliated with two Quaker Meetings in Media. Quakers are among the leading peace activists in Media.

Unlike numerous Media housewives, antiwar demonstrators who appear at the monthly induction ceremonies, were well

aware of the existence in their midst of the F.B.I. branch office.

It is on the second floor of the County Building, which is actually a private building across the street from the county offices. The County Building has offices on the first two floors and apartments on the top two.

Because of the apartments, the building is open night and day, with free access to stairs and elevator. It has no guard.

The agent in charge of the Media F.B.I. office, Thomas F. Lewis, is being transferred, reportedly to Atlanta, because of the theft.

Across the street at the county courthouse, Sheriff Paul J. McKinney said, "People feel sorry for Tom Lewis."

Three days after the burglary, Prof. William C. Davidson of Haverford College read a statement at Swarthmore telling

what the Citizens Commission to Investigate the F.B.I. had stolen and why. He told Mr. Anthony he had received it in the mail and gave him a copy that night. But there was no public disclosure of the contents of the documents until this week, when the commission mailed copies of 14 of the stolen documents to newspapers and politicians.

Mr. Davidson, a physics professor, and the Rev. Daniel J. Berrigan have been named by the Justice Department, but not indicted, as co-conspirators with the Rev. Philip F. Berrigan and five others who were indicted in January on charges of plotting to kidnap Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser, and to blow up heating systems in Federal buildings in Washington.