

# F.B.I. Reports Losing 20 Informers Over Fear of Disclosures of Names

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 24—The Federal Bureau of Investigation has asserted that more than 20 of its undercover informers, concerned that their identities may become public through various inquiries into the bureau's activities, have broken off contact with the bureau over the last three months.

In addition, according to James B. Adams, one of three top aides to Clarence M. Kelley, the F.B.I. Director, the bureau believes that a number of other informers have "simply ceased to provide adequate information so that the F.B.I. will discontinue their service" in that capacity.

A year ago, according to Congressional investigators, the bureau had 1,500 political informers in this country.

Mr. Adams made the assertions in an affidavit submitted by the bureau in connection with a lawsuit brought against revolutionary organization that until recently it and other Federal agencies by the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist revolution was the target of a 38-year investigation by the bureau.

That inquiry was ordered ended several weeks ago by the Department of Justice, and the party's lawyers are pressing in court for the identities of the informers in the bureau's ranks at the time the order was issued.

## Identification Called Essential

The party's argument is that it cannot be certain that the informers have ceased reporting on its activities unless it knows who they are and can take steps to exclude them from its councils.

But Mr. Adams, in opposing the disclosure of the names, cited in the affidavit a number of examples in which other bureau informers, most of whom are paid for their services, had withdrawn their cooperation or expressed concern about their safety.

Not all of the examples listed by Mr. Adams concerned so-called "security" informers, those that report on radical or revolutionary political organizations. In one case, he said, a source "who is in an excellent position to furnish" information about hostile foreign intelligence agents "is being prohibited from doing so by his company," which feared that "his exposure would severely

damage its international reputation and contacts."

"Top-level criminal informants have indicated that disclosure of their identities would result in their deaths," Mr. Adams asserted, adding that some of the bureau's 50 national field offices had advised headquarters "that the general public is becoming more hesitant to furnish information since the public feels that the F.B.I. can no longer maintain confidentiality."

Mr. Adams, who is in charge of overseeing all the bureau's investigative activities, noted that the public was "well aware of a recent decision ordering that F.B.I. informant files be produced in this litigation."

He referred to a ruling by Thomas P. Griesa, the Federal District judge who is hearing the Socialist Workers' lawsuit in New York, that the bureau hand over to the party a 2,000-page file reflecting the activities of Timothy Redfearn.

Mr. Redfearn, who was recently indicted by a Denver grand jury in connection with his theft of documents from the party's office there, informed on the party and other groups in the Denver area for four years.

The Redfearn file showed, among other things, that the 25-year-old graduate student had burglarized the party's offices on an earlier occasion in 1973 with the knowledge of his F.B.I. superiors, that he had committed at least seven nonpolitical burglaries of which the bureau was aware, and that while serving the bureau he had been hospitalized for a month for psychiatric treatment.

Mr. Adams listed for the judge in general terms a number of examples where informers, both political and criminal, had been beaten or murdered after their dual roles had become public knowledge. He also said that the naming of the lapsed informers on the Socialist Workers Party, whom Mr. Kelley has told to cease their reporting on the party, would have a "deleterious effect" on all bureau investigations.

"Perhaps the most serious development," he said, "is the fact that F.B.I. agents now realize that they can no longer ethically assure sources of unqualified confidentiality."