

U.S. ADMITS PLAN TO DISRUPT PARTY

Also Concedes Surveillance
of Socialist Workers

By FARNSWORTH FOWLE

The Federal Government, replying to a suit against it, has acknowledged that it conducted "electronic surveillance" of Socialist Workers party members from 1945 to 1963 and that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had a program to disrupt the party from 1961 to 1969.

The Government's reply, filed Monday in Federal District Court as a result of the party's complaint last July 18, was made public yesterday at a news conference called by the Political Rights Defense Fund, which is raising money for the costs of the court action.

The Government said that the "basic purpose" of the disruption program had been "to alert the public to the fact that S.W.P. is not just another socialist group but follows the revolutionary principles of Marx, Lenin and Engels as interpreted by Leon Trotsky."

The reply followed the F.B.I.'s disclosure Dec. 6 of an order that its late director, J. Edgar Hoover, issued to all offices on May 10, 1968, to begin an attack against groups and individuals "who spout revolution and unlawfully challenge society to obtain their demands."

Unwarranted Taps Denied

This and other counterintelligence programs were terminated without explanation in a Hoover directive of April 28, 1971. The organizations and individuals were not identified by the bureau at the time.

In the document made public yesterday, submitted on behalf of United States Attorney Paul J. Curran, the Government issued a general denial that in 1972 and 1973 election campaigns it made unwarranted use of devices to intercept confidential conversations of party members, supporters and candidates.

It acknowledged knowing of only one such wiretap—in 1972, on the Los Angeles home of James P. Cannon, then national chairman. The tap was placed on the basis of a report to the bureau by the local police, the Government said.

The suit is a class action by the Socialist Workers party, its affiliated Young Socialist Alliance, Mrs. Linda Jenness, the party's 1972 Presidential nominee, and 14 other named individuals, as well as "all others similarly situated." They asked the Federal court for more than \$27-million in damages because of alleged violations of party members' constitutional rights by the defendants—the Attorney General, other department and agency heads, President Nixon and several former Nixon associates.

Harassment Is Charged

The complaint charged a systematic campaign of excessive interrogation, employment discrimination and other harassment of party members and supporters and other illegal acts, which it said impaired the party's ability to participate effectively in Federal, state and local elections.

The complaint asked for a permanent injunction against wiretapping, mail monitoring and breaking into party offices. It also asked that the party be removed from the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations.

John Ratliff, of the legal staff of the Political Rights Defense Fund, called the Government's admissions "astonishing." He said that the fund had already asked for further documents about the disruption program and would take necessary legal steps "if the Government resists their motions."

"When the Government singles out and harasses a political group on the basis of its ideas and programs," he said, "it threatens everyone's First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment rights." Some Government assertions in the reply, he said, "go beyond what they were making before."

A memorandum with the Government reply argued the Federal District Courts lack jurisdiction over the President and that the complaint as to him should be dismissed. Mr. Ratliff called Mr. Nixon the "chief conspirator and ultimate authority for the illegal and unconstitutional acts" in the complaint, and said that the fund's lawyers would offer counterarguments on this motion.

Mrs. Jenness said there was

"nothing secretive" about her party, calling it an "open, legal organization." Recalling past Government denials of interference, she said, "We always knew they carried out these activities." She declared that the Government was no longer "in a position to get away with the amount of lying."

Mrs. Jenness, asked about the size of the party, said that in the 1972 election it got about 100,000 votes in 23 states. She said the members, numbering about 2,000, were comparable to active party workers in the major parties. The weekly readership of the party's journal, *The Militant*, she estimated at 70,000. It is edited by her husband.