

FBI file

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
SWARTHMORE, PENNSYLVANIA 19081

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

(215) KI 4-7900

May 3, 1971

To: Members of the President's Committee on Surveillance and Privacy at Swarthmore: Mr. Cross, Mr. Pryor, Mr. Smith, Mr. Cook, Miss Robinson, and Mr. Breibart

From: Jerome H. Wood, Jr. *JHW*

Re: the holding of investigative hearings

It is my judgement that investigative hearings involving the matter of F.B.I. surveillance, personal privacy, and the role of College personnel in these connections definitely should be held. Such hearings will be useful (1) for the purpose of clarifying issues and for obtaining what additional information may be forthcoming, and (2) for the purpose of exonerating or -- as the case may be -- ascribing culpability to those members of staff who are alledged to have cooperated improperly with the F.B.I., or to have invaded the rights of personal privacy of members of the Swarthmore community. Such hearings would, moreover, demonstrate to the community that action is being taken with regard to this highly important business.

The persons conducting the hearings should be the members of the presently constituted Presidential committee, with the exception of the President himself, who is excluded from participation in that he may have to take appropriate administrative action at the conclusion of the hearings. It should be clear to all persons involved in the hearings -- and to the College community at large -- that at the conclusion of the hearings, the committee will submit a report to the President as well as recommendations for either public exoneration of the persons alledged to have acted improperly or disciplinary action directed at these same persons.

The committee, in the course of conducting the hearings, should receive testimony from all three members of the College staff alledged to have cooperated improperly with, or furnished information ~~to~~ concerning students and faculty members to, the F.B.I.: i.e., Mr. Peirsol, the chief of campus security forces, Mrs. Feiy, the chief College operator, and Miss Webb, senior secretary in the Registrar's office. These individuals may be told the general areas of questioning in advance, and should be advised that they may -- if they so desire -- have counsel present with them at the hearings, which are to be conducted separately for each person. The Committee should also have College counsel present, for its part. In addition, the committee should invite testimony from students, or members of the College staff, who wish to testify concerning such damage to themselves as may have been done by the disclosure of information about them to the F.B.I., or who have reason to believe that their rights of privacy have been violated by any or all of the College personnel to be interrogated.

The committee should have a number of questions prepared in advance, but not as a specification of "charges." At the initial stage of each hearing, the idea is that the persons under interrogation will have an opportunity to comment on the F.B.I. documents, and to state their views as to what they would regard as

permissible and impermissible disclosure to, or cooperation with, the F.B.I. or other agencies of Government by them in their capacities as College employees.

- (a) Mr. Peirsol should discuss especially how he views his relationship with outside law enforcement agencies in his capacity as a College employee.
- (b) Mrs. Feiy should be asked about the circumstances under which she is alleged to have provided information concerning Professor Dan Bennett to the F.B.I. She should also be confronted with such persons as may wish to testify concerning violations of their rights to personal privacy by Miss Feiy.
- (c) It is my opinion that Miss Webb's case is the most serious of the three, and that she should be questioned very closely, especially concerning the circumstances under which she released information concerning Black students at Swarthmore -- and she has admitted releasing such information -- during the so-called SASS "crisis" of 1969. I myself have a series of questions to which I would like her response.

It is my feeling, finally, that the work of the committee in setting policy guidelines for the future should continue and be brought to the speediest possible conclusion. At the same time, however, I believe that any individual deemed by the committee (as a result of the hearings) to have been guilty of improper actions be recommended for censure, transferral to another College post, or dismissal by the President.