

# Constructing the Red Menace: Domestic Intelligence Gathering and Religious Activism During the Cold War

Image Source: Billy James Hargis Papers (MC 1412), University of Arkansas Archives Special Collections



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## CHURCH LEAGUE OF AMERICA

1407 HILL AVENUE • WHEATON, ILLINOIS

7 February 1962

Dear Church League Supporter:

**PURPOSE:** This project explores the interaction between religion, domestic intelligence gathering by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the development of political conservatism in twentieth century American culture. It focuses on NGO pressure groups in the USA that assembled large archives of information about a range of perceived Communist "threats" to the American political and social system from the onset of the Great Depression to the end of the Cold War (1930-1990).

**SUMMARY:** From the Great Depression to the end of the Cold War, the United States witnessed an explosion in the number of religiously motivated organizations that built private intelligence gathering operations. Many of these organizations collected massive archives of public and private information designed to monitor and disseminate intelligence about groups and cultural trends perceived to threaten U.S. constitutional order.

**FINDINGS:** Careful study of these religious NGOs reveals the complex interaction between private domestic intelligence gathering programs and the popular press, law enforcement agencies, and anti-communist investigators

Very sincerely yours,

*Edgar C. Bundy*

Edgar C. Bundy  
Executive Secretary

ECB/gz



Image Source: Norman Alderdice Collection, Hoover Institution Archives

On Tues...  
BIRCH...  
COLLEGE OF...

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
1851

The address 18 Columbine Road used by David B. Melville, of extreme Rightwing movement at the Massachusetts...  
...red to Linda Jane...  
...Massachusetts, 0219...

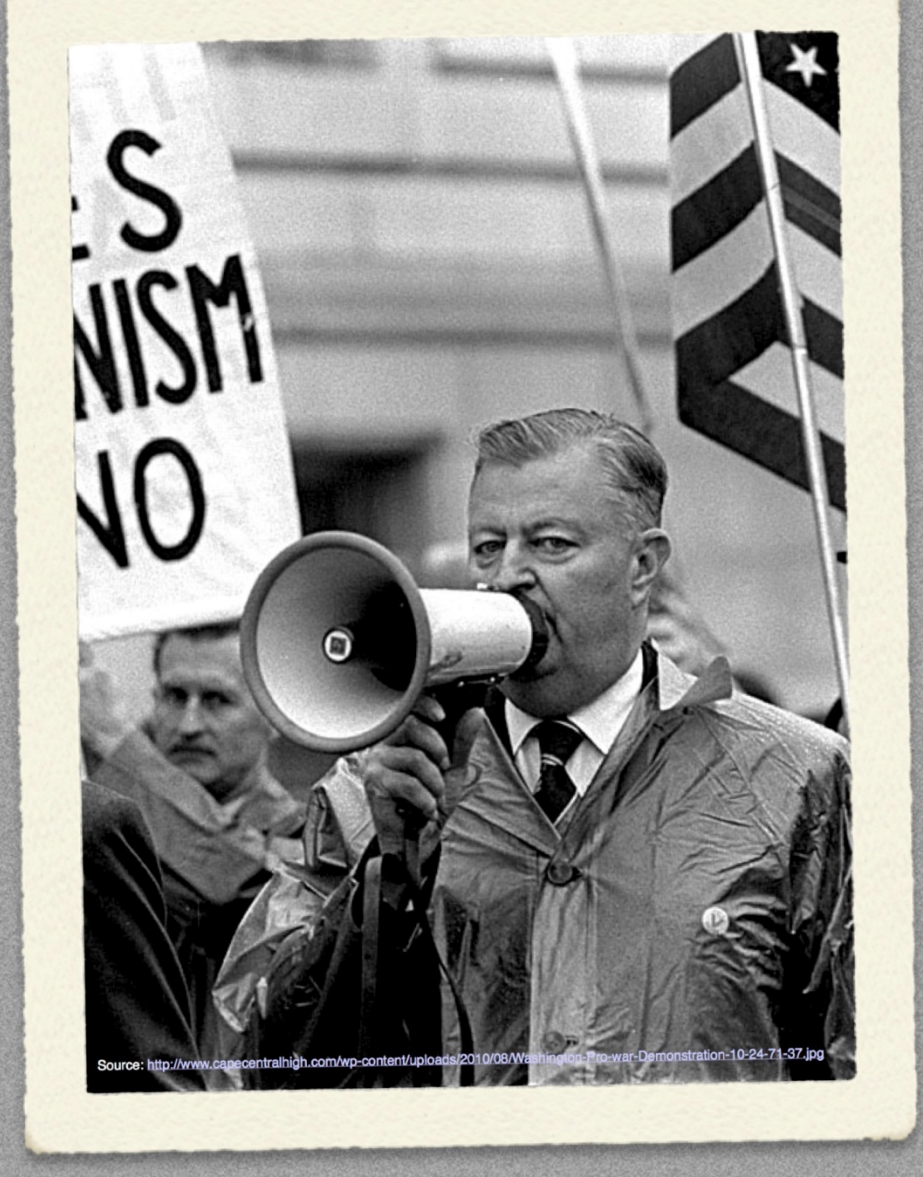
**HOW RED IS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES?**

At a Constituting Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, 1950, the Federal Churches... went into denominational agencies... National Council of Christ in the U.S. legal charter, and... grams and leaders... changed although it... under a new name.

- Major Private Intelligence Gathering NGOs (clock-wise from top):
- + Church League of America
  - + American Council of Christian Churches
  - + American Council of Christian Laymen
  - + Circuit Riders, Inc.



**Cap. Edgar C. Bundy**  
General Chairman of the Church League of America (Former Air Force intelligence officer)



**Rev. Carl McIntire**  
Founder and Pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church in Collingwood, N.J. President of the American and International Councils of Christian Churches



**Verne P. Kaub**  
American Council of Christian Laymen (Former Ad executive and congregational layman)



**M. G. Lowman**  
Executive Secretary of Circuit Riders, INC. (Methodist Layman and former advertising executive)

### Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : MR. TOLSON

FROM : G. A. NEASE

DATE: December

SUBJECT: RE: FYAP PROJECT - Preliminary Research

The first stages of this project have focused on a network of NGOs that ranged across the political spectrum. Through archival collections in California and New York, I have researched the activities of the ADL, the labor union-supported Group Research, Inc. (GRI), and the anti-Catholic activists associated with Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU). Archives in Arkansas, Oregon, and Rhode Island have provided a window into the intelligence work of an interconnected network of ultra-conservative organizations, including Robert Welch's John Birch Society, Rev. Billy James Hargis's Christian Crusade Against Communism, and Methodist Layman M. G. Lowman's Circuit Riders, Inc.

This extensive archival research has allowed me to recover the largely untold history of how these organizations developed sophisticated intelligence gathering operations designed to monitor the perceived dangerous activities of various ethnic and/or religious minority groups, religious extremists, and far-left/far-right ideologues. Further, I have begun to document how many of these organizations directly or indirectly collaborated with governmental agencies especially the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to further their own research and monitoring agendas by influencing public policy priorities.

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ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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