

Title

"Stalking the FBI: The Hazards and
Rewards of Investigating the Investigators"

[Set out what I am going to cover]

FOIPA

The FOIA (later the FOIPA) became law in 1966 and was subsequently amended and strengthened in 1974 by the Senator Hart amendments and over President Ford's veto. The 1974 amendments were very critical because they opened the compass of the Act to include a citizen's access now to the FBI, CIA, and other intelligence and police agencies for the first time in a significant manner.

[mention in passing President Ford's veto. When Ford was a Congressman from Michigan he was a great FBI asset. This was especially the case while Ford served on the Warren Commission set up to investigate the assassination of JFK. While he served on that august body he was a "snitch"(there is no other way to put it)for the Bureau. Any information the Bureau wanted about the internal workings and deliberations of the Commission, especially its executive sessions, Ford was eager and ready to provide. Ford was a "good soldier" for Hoover(who, incidentally did not trust the WC. Had actively opposed the very idea of a presidential commission. That is another story). I need to stress here that Ford's colleagues on the Commission were not aware of the game Ford was playing. Perhaps he regarded his actions as motivated by the highest form of patriotism. He also certainly could have expected a quid pro quo in advancing his own political career given the fact he was doing favors for Hoover, a player in Washington with inestimable power and influence.]

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The Freedom of Information Act is based on the assumption that the government and the information of government belong to the people. [How radical a concept!!!]. Consistent with this view is the notion that the proper function of the state in respect to government information is that of custodian in service to society. [FOIPA is totally sui generis to the USA]. With the passage of the FOIPA the burden of proof shifted from the individual to the government: the n "need to know" standard was replaced by the "right to know" doctrine and the onus was shifted to the government to justify secrecy rather than the individual to obtain access.

The impetus for the original Act was largely based on the well documented facts unearthed by Congressional committees that intelligence agencies in general, and the FBI in particular, had been acting as a law unto themselves--harrassing political activists, surveilling and intimidating civil rights^{activists} and political organizations, and conducting vendetta campaigns against leading figures for no other reason than that the Bureau(Hoover) did not like their beliefs or their politics.

With the Freedom of Information Act we touched based in the most therapeutic way with the angels of our better nature or with those self-evident truths of our own professed secular religion. It was James Madison who best underscored the crucial nexus between a self-governing people and access to information:

"A people who means to be their own government, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both."

[Millie's puppies come to mind. . . .]

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[My argument w/ the FBI]

It would not be giving away any national secret to note that government agencies do not like being made accountable to the public and they resist citizens' efforts to dislodge information about their activities.

In providing an overview of my own trials and tribulations in dealing w/ the FBI my purpose is not to indulge in personal biography but to provide some idea of how the system works. My own experience is anything but unique and that is the only reason it has any value in relating. If any of you are considering using the FOIPA for your own research purposes perhaps my experience can serve as a Guide to the Perplexed. If any of you have used the Act you can tell me if I exaggerated.

I filed an FOIPA request for FBI records on the PPC In October 1984. My filing date was based on an anticipated sabbatical beginning in January 1986 when I hoped to start working on my project.. By law I should have received recognition ^{less than 10 days} from the FBI that it had received my request. This didn't happen.

When I finally received my first communication from the Head of Records Management Division, FBI, I was told that the processing of the records would cost me about \$2,600. (They were not pre-processed since I was the first to ask for them). I then went ahead and asked for a fee waiver that I felt entitled to under the law. The FOIPA provides for a waiver of fees if the subject matter is of obvious public interest and the requester is well-qualified to write on the subject. I didn't know precisely what standards the FBI applied for their interpretation of "well qualified." I did have a Ph.D. in

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History and a publication record including several articles in The South Atlantic Quarterly (publishing affiliate of Duke University) dealing w/ the FBI and the Memphis sanitation strike and the bureau's disreputation campaign against a black activist group in Memphis calling themselves The Invaders. So I thought, well I am no David Garrow or Taylor Branch, but I was qualified for the fee waiver provision.

The upshot of the whole exercise was that despite my 14 months of lead time, my sabbatical came and went and all I had to show for my efforts was a stack of correspondence about my request, numerous phone calls from the clerk working on my request, but no records. Moreover, the FBI denied my request for a fee waiver. I have to note that before I filed for the fee waiver, I did send the Bureau a check for \$650.00 as a "good faith" retainer to show that I was serious about my request. The Bureau misplaced this check so I had to send another.

By the end of the 1986 summer I felt I had no recourse but to hire legal counsel. I hired a Washington lawyer who specialized in FOIPA requests. (Actually, he was a guy I knew and I knew he was one of two best FOIPA lawyers on the East coast). In short, although I had the law on my side I had to sue the Bureau.

There followed a lot of cross-correspondence between my lawyer and the FBI's lawyer, the Justice Department. My C.A. suit (86-1840) was scheduled to go before a federal judge on a Monday sometime in September 1986. The FBI strung out the case until the Friday before the court date and finally capitulated. It agreed to the fee waiver and to expedite my request.

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Well I guess you could say I won my case I still had a lawyer's bill to the tune of \$2000.00 big ones. [Hood: This is where my Hodson money went).

My point is that while the FOIPA is a magnificent creation federal agencies can vitiate its purpose by Delay. In my own case I did not receive all the records I ask for until the summer of 1990, almost six years after my original filing date. The delay tactic is SOP for the Bureau. ^{the delay} They can range from the impossible to the ^{less believable} incredible. Reference to the March 1990 Hearings before the Don Edwards Oversight subcommittee of the House Committee on the Judiciary. Delays may be as long as ten years.

In addition to delays, the other tactic used by the Bureau to great advantage in frustrating the law is deletion. Under the FOIPA there are 9 categories that cover subject matters that are not to be disclosed. For example, include medical records, documents relating solely to internal personal rules and practices of Executive Branch agencies covered under the Law, material that could compromise the nation's security or divulge an informer's name, etc. These, of course, are all legitimate and absolutely necessary.

The requester has the right to challenge any of these exemptions or deletions. The challenge goes to the FBI which turns it over to the Justice Department's Office of Information and Privacy (OIP). Once the OIP gets the paper work and appends a file number you can be in for even greater delays

For example. . . Read from my challenge.

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H oover's Vendetta Against King

Say something about King and the FBI since King was the driving force behind the SCLC and its planned Poor People's Campaign.

It is important in this context to be clear about which Dr. King we are talking about.

I think the public image of King, the civil rights leader we memorialize, is generally the King of the "We Shall Overcome" and "I Have a Dream" phase of the civil rights movement of the later 1950s and the 1963 March on Washington. This was the high-water mark of what has been called the "Second American Revolution." That comparatively brief period in the history of this momentous struggle when black demands for racial justice seemed irresistible and could no longer be deferred. The end of discrimination and the enfranchisement of blacks was part of the national agenda. [Support by JFK + LBJ]

Out of the civil rights struggles in the American South--Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma come to mind--and King's leadership raised him to both a national and international celebrity. Recognition came quickly in the form of honorary degrees, foundation grants, Time's "Man of the Year" award(1964), an audience with the Pope, all culminating in the Nobel Peace Prize.

I think for the most part the Dr. King whose birthday we celebrate as a national holiday(~~except for Arizonians~~) is the King of this, the civil rights, phase of his life. He is more or less a comfortable national hero, whose smoothed-over, present-day image bears little resemblance to the human King or, better, the political King of the last two years of his life.

author as falsely depicted
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W. Lee ...
King - ...

Certainly by 1967, it was clear that King was going through an agonizing reappraisal. He suspended his earlier and sustained convictions that white racism could be overcome by appealing to the nation's moral conscience with the positive and creative force of Christian love. By 1967 King no longer believed that America had a moral conscience. American in the Vietnam war era, or more specifically, the power structure in America, ^{to King's mind,} was dominated and ridden by racism at home and abroad, economic exploitation, and rampant militarism abroad.

Part of the reason for his radical transformation was his realization that after 1964 the civil rights movement was at an impasse. Despite the civil rights victories since 1954, King was painfully aware that black Americans had barely moved forward at all. Nor was the bitter irony lost on him that these legislative victories in the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) did precious little to improve the lot of the millions of blacks living in the ghettos of the North. [Recall that King faced a bitter ^{and bewildering} defeat in Mayor Daley's Chicago in King's "war on the slums" in 1966. *Slums*]

Recall that King came out publicly against the President's Vietnam policy in his April 1967 Riverside Church speech in New York. He characterized the Johnson administration as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" and urged the government to unbind the nation from this Asian madness. To my knowledge King is the only American black leader in our history to publicly oppose ^{the} government's war policy. To King's mind America was a sick society that could not be turned around by piecemeal reform. He believed that a revolution in values ignited by a profound reorganization of society that redistributed economic and political power was needed to REDEEM THE SOUL OF AMERICA.

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It was to shake the foundations of the power structure and make it more responsive to the needs of the nation's dispossessed, King and the SCLC threatened a new march on Washington for the spring of 1968. The key to King's radical transformation was the shift away from civil rights to social justice issues involving all of the nation's poor--blacks(southern and northern ghetto), Appalachian whites, Chicanos, and native Americans. A shift away from civil rights matters to economic and class issues. The first phase of the Poor People's Campaign was planned in the fall of 1967 and set in motion in early 1968, when SCLC staffers began recruiting several thousands of the nation's poor to march on the nation's Capitol and encamp in a shantytown--later called Resurrection City--virtually on the dorsteps of Congress.

Phase two of the PPC was tactically somewhat vague. But the general idea was to link up the poor people's army with thousands of antiwar allies and blacks from the Washington DC ghetto and engage in nonviolent tactics of massive civil disobedience to try and bring the war machine to an end by disrupting the daily business of the Pentagon, Congress, and Executive Office buildings. These threatened shock tactics were to arouse a moribund Congress and pressure it into passing an Economic Bill of Rights for the nation's poor.

[Addendum: Kerner Report and recommendations] Feb. 1968 released.

King's transformation of the civil rights movement into a populist campaign for the redistribution of economic and political rights--issues of class--only heightened the political threat he posed to the reigning powers in government.

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The FBI Director, of course, that self-appointed guardian of American political norms and values, had already come to regard King as a danger. I think the 1963 March on Washington capstoned by King's "I Have a Dream" speech alerted Hoover and convinced him that King was a threat to the director's way of life, his bureaucracy, and his vision of a white Christain, racially harmonious America (where blacks knew their place). But it was the King of the antiwar movement and the PPC that galvanized America's top cop and the FBI heirarchy to unleash a "no-holds-barred" campaign to bring King down, destroy his credibility as a national leader and spokesman for the dispossessed. Hoover and the Bureau elites came to regard King ("Zorro") as the most dangerous militant in the land.

_____Some Examples of the Campaign Against King---

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FBI's Campaign Against POCAM

The PPC received top priority by the FBI. It was a hot-button item despite the assassination of Dr. King.

For example, very early on the FBI stopped referring to the PPC as the Washington Spring Project on all its internal memoranda and adopted a new designation---the acronym POCAM. The reason was appropriately bureaucratic. It was to affect great savings in the clerical time by using the acronym POCAM in view of the mountains of paper generated by the Bureau's sweeping surveillance program against the PPC.

[The FBI documents I have FBI HQers file and Washington FO combined total well over 4,000 serials or separate documents. Since most of these serials are more than single-pages in length the number of pages in just these two files(the main files)must be better than 10,000 pages. I have no way of knowing how many reports and memoranda, etc., are held in the other 58 FBI FOs from all around the country. And I should add that the PPC attracted the attention of the CIA, the Secret Service(Washington saw the PPC as a potential threat to the President), and branches of military intelligence(PPC as threat of civil insurrection)plus state and local law enforcement agencies].

11/2/69
Chapter III Introduction
When you go over these records you are struck by the chilling and awesome nature of the FBI as a political force in our society. From the director on down, the executive officers who ran the FBI constituted a disciplined, resourceful, and highly motivated political elite. You are also struck by the fact that as with King, the FBI's campaign against the PPC had nothing to do with threats to the national security

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Addendum Wiretaps on S. Levison

Stanley Levison came under Bureau scrutiny in the 1950s and placed him on the Reserve Index by 1955 because they had no information that he active in the CP. That he had severed any ties with the CP because it had no viable policy on the racial question in the US.

In February 1960 the FBI tried ^{twice} to actively recruit Levison as an informer.

In 1961 Levison began a long-time association with Dr. King. Now the Bureau decided that he was a threat to the national security. That he was a "sleeper" agent for the CP and he was subjected to massive surveillance because he was a possible source who could manipulate King and get him to follow the CP line, etc.

Massive surveillance of Levison. His phone was tapped from 1961 until the early 1970s. he was a great source of political intelligence.

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Addendum: Wiretaps on B. Rustin and S. Levison

B. Rustin was the organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. In the 1960s he was the full-time director of the A. Philip Randolph institute.

From the FBI file on Rustin why was a target for FBI ELSUR?

File showed that he had membership in the Youth Communist League(NYC)in 1938. 1938. [Rustin file 6080--case file no.] to 1941.

A 1963 FBI FO(NY)reported that there was no information indicating contact between Rustin and the American Communist Party

As a consequence Rustin was placed on the FBI's Reserve Index list. But once he was again on the periphery of King's inner circle again in 1967 and in phone contact with Dr. King.

In 1967 Hoover ordered that the NY FO begin an active surveillanc of Rustin. The reason the director gave for activating the Rustin case despite the NY's FO's conclusion that Rustin was unsympathetic to the CP's cause. Hoover responded to the NY office's assessment: "While there may not be any direct evidence that Rustin is a communist , neither is there any substantial evidence that he is anti-communist."

The ELSUR of Rustin was reactivated. The NY FO added to the Rustin file that he was still receiving the "Daily Worker" and had attended a meeting of the SCLC in NYC in March 1967.

The reason for Hoover's reactivation of surveiallance on Rustin was purely for reasons of political intelligence gathering. By taping Rustin's phone the FBI was able to pick up conversations with King.

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Just Received

or in any legitimate law enforcement activities. In short, ~~much of what I saw~~ in the FBI records of the PPC were unwarranted and impermissible federal police-state-like intrusions, without the sanction of law, that violated the legal and Constitutional rights of people not accused of any crime. And that since Hoover, all his top bureau assistants, SAC's and special agents were all lawyers they knew their actions were illegal and unwarranted.

In project POCAM the FBI sanctioned the use of intimidation, Red-baiting, disinformation and disruption tactics against American citizens. These are all techniques that intelligence agencies deploy against a foreign adversary.

Some examples:

Project POCAM provided the bureau with its first real opportunity to test its new Ghetto Informant Program (GIP). Under the GIP the FBI had recruited a network of about 4,000 racial informers and ghetto tipsters within the national black community. [GIP was authorized by the White House as an early warning system with the belief that this kind of grassroots intelligence would provide the President and national leaders with some predictive capability to know when the next ghetto would blow.]

The FBI instructed these ghetto informants, especially in the black communities in the South, to circulate the rumor that anyone who was on welfare and showed any intention of supporting the PPC or volunteering to join the army of the poor in Washington, would lose their welfare benefits. This was a most effective intimidation tactic. I saw evidence that FBI FOs in Birmingham and Savannah, Georgia, used this deception

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to great advantage in drying up support for the PPC.

Hoover ordered all his FOs to open files on all PPC recruiters and area coordinators. There was no problem in identifying who they were because the list of their names was turned over to the Bureau by the SCLC Comptroller at King's headquarters in Atlanta. The FBI source, Jim Harrison, was a prize FBI informant who received about \$10,000 a year for spying on King and the SCLC.

Most of the recruiters and coordinators were either ministers, SCLC representatives with years of experience in the civil rights struggle in the South, or community leaders and activists from northern cities with church-sponsored civic reform programs or members of Quaker action groups.

From the documents released to me the material in these files contained information about past political activities, personal matters, and trivia--virtually none of this information was related to criminal behavior or violent activity. Much of the masking out in the records probably contained highly personal stuff that could be potentially derogatory--whether accurate or alleged--that was dragged up by FBI informants. [All raw information].

A standard FBI practice when dealing with Racial Matters was to see if any of the targeted individuals appeared on the Bureau's Rabble Rouser Index. These were individuals who, according to FBI investigative standards, showed a propensity for creating racial discord and unrest that threatened "domestic security."

Only two of the SCLC recruiters were on the Index. One of these names surfaced from the Birmingham, Alabama, FO. He apparently qualified because he had been involved in past civil rights demonstrations (no record of arrests) with the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Also because he was an associate of the SCLC's paid organizer in Alabama. According to the Hoover FBI's norms of good citizenship any

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civil rights activist was a potential rabble rouser.

A "nonprosecutive" (FBI lingo) summary of this file was sent ^{locally} to the Secret Service, the Attorney General's Office, and the regional military intelligence agencies.

[The other name that came up on the RR Index was Rev. Shuttleworth, Birmingham, Alabama]

In short order, the director altered all FBI FOs to come up with a comprehensive (as comprehensive as possible) identification of just rank-and-file participants in the upcoming PPC.

Save for later
Note: Read from Director to SACs, Feb. 29, '68, HQ file, for Hoover's "check list"

Mention the practice of indexing. These names go on the General FBI Index. It is generally estimated that there are about 20,000,000 names on this list. Both in 1968 and today. I estimated that under Project POCAM the Bureau indexed at least 1800 to 1900 individuals and no less than 140 different organizations who were in some way involved with the PPC.

Categories included: Ministers(259); Catholic clergy(34); grass-roots organizers(86); Professors(29); Politicians(29); labor leaders(12); students(34); reporters and press people(25); the great bulk were work-a-day citizens ranging in age from 4 years to 86.

Indexing, of course, still goes on bu Bureau. Read sections from the GAO report.

(Are You Now or Have You Ever Been in the FBI Files?)

Red-baiting was another tactic. For the FBI the name of the game is control. Red-baiting was a way to influence the Executive Branch, especially the president's, perception of King and the PPC. The FBI Intelligence Division distributed what they characterized as a "monograph" entitled: "Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Current Analysis."

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This was in March 1968. It was really a boilerplate indictment of the man and the SCLC that existed in several earlier versions for dissemination and was revised under Hoover's orders to coincide with the upcoming PPC. The central thrust of the 39-page document was to link King and the PPC with alleged communists. One section of the monograph entitled: "Communist Confidants" stated that King had allowed himself to be a dupe of the CP and was following the CP line exemplified by his anti-Vietnam stance and concluded that riots and violence in the nation's Capitol might be the goal of King's communist advisers, etc. (A kind of home-grown Tet Offensive).

The monograph was circulated to the White House, Attorney General, Cabinet Officers, the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

This "Current Analysis" was just one exercise in Red-baiting in early 1968. The FBI Domestic Intelligence Division cranked almost daily intelligence summaries (TAYs) of carefully selected information for President Johnson which regularly linked King and his movement with confidants with "subversive" connections. [Names of Rustin, Levison, Wachtel, Jones, etc., were always included].

[Note on Sullivan. He was the FBI executive officer who concocted the note to King prior to his trip to Stockholm to receive his Nobel Peace prize inviting King to commit suicide before he was publicly discredited. . . . (Have copy of note handy here)

Disinformation tactics. Many different types were employed but left me just give you one radiant example of what might be characterized as Bureau-think.

Frank Ditto case

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Ditto was local community leader in east Detroit, one of the nation's largest ghettos. He enjoyed a reputation among neighbors and residents as a man who "comes across." He could deliver in terms of making life in the ghetto a little easier.

Ditto was director of an organization calling itself East Side Voice of Independent Detroit. The organization was sponsored and financed by a coalition of mixed denominational churches located on the east side. Ditto resided in and worked out of one of the larger Catholic churches, St. Bernard's. One other fact to mention was that Ditto was so highly regarded that King wanted him to be his PPC recruiter on the east side.

That's all the FBI FO in Detroit needed to know. They set up a "sting" operation to discredit him with his ghetto clientele.

Ditto received what the bureau calls a "pretext" phone call from a man passing himself off as a Mr. G. L. Whyte. Whyte gives Ditto a "pitch" that he is a Detroit businessman who wants to help the cause. But he wants to remain anonymous. Shortly after this conversation a check for \$100.00 arrives from Mr. Whyte with a little note that says "To help the cause of humanity in my own humble way."

There follows almost weekly a telephone call to Ditto from Mr. Whyte about the progress of recruitment for the PPC. Ditto is pretty open with this anonymous benefactor. The FBI particularly wants to find out when King is planning a trip to Detroit to campaign for the PPC.

Once the Detroit FBI felt it had gotten all the useful information out of Ditto it plans a "sting" operation.

Now that Mr. Whyte has cultivated Ditto's confidence the plan is to send Ditto \$200.00 to help defray transportation costs to get poor

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people to Washington DC. The \$200.00 was represented as a down payment with a promise to furnish the balance to the bus company on the day the buses would arrive at a designated street corner in Dito's neighborhood to pick up passengers. Of course the buses would never arrive and Ditto would be discredited with constituency!!!!!! This is what the FBI calls a COINTELPRO.

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A. The FBI and the Caravans

Mention that King's assassination (after the initial shock) galvanized the SCLC and mobilized a great deal of support from across the country to go forward w/ the PPC.

The evidence of this was the increase in financial support and increase in the number of volunteers who were ready to join the caravans that were heading to Washington. (Mention the various caravans of buses and cars--NE, MW, Southern, to be joined later by caravans originating from SF, LA, San Antonio, and Seattle.)

The Mood in Washington about the news that the Poor People were coming to Washington--no longer be conveniently invisible--but virtually camped out on the doorstep of Congress and executive agencies generated a siege mentality on Capitol Hill.

Attorney General Clark would later characterize the this mood as "Paranoid."

The first caravans were expected by mid-May and through March and early May there was a good deal of law-and-order rhetoric in the Congress. (Culminating in the Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act--a vintage law and order piece of legislation)

A "snapshot-like" indication of this anxiety and apprehension gripping Washington officialdom can be very briefly underscored by the kind of concerns an Administration task force was wrestling with on the eve of the arrival of the PPC caravans.

The task force was set up by the White House and included WH staffers, (Joe Califano was informal chair), Pentagon people, Secret Service, Justice Department representatives, and staff from the DC mayor's office. This group met from March into May and was looking into preventive measures and contingency plans in the event of rioting in

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the District and possible urban unrest in any of the other 124 cities that were on the Administration's "hot list."

"We must prepare for guerrilla-type warfare, incidents in the suburbs, use of children, and Castro-trained commandos, and various other possibilities. . . ."

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My basic point is that this pall of anxiety and apprehension among government leaders was grist to the Hoover mills.

As far as the caravans were concerned they received a good deal of attention. They were subject to massive surveillance by the FBI, the agents of the Justice Department, military intelligence, and state and local police.

Hoover ordered each FBI FO along the route of march of each caravan to submit a daily intelligence summary to the Bureau.

FBI agents solicited information about the bus schedules, the person who ordered the buses, and the number of tickets purchased, from cooperating officials of the bus companies patronized by local SCLC recruiters.

Everyone connected with the PPC whose name appeared in the newspapers, on list compiled by PPC recruiters and turned over to FBI agents by office staff, copies of motel registration cards made available to FBI agents, and informants travelling with the caravans, were all routinely Indexed.

Cincinnati agent who read the name off an identification tag of a woman joining the MW caravan was indexed.

Indexing

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An administrator at a small college in Indianapolis, Indiana, alerted the FO in that city that some 42 students accompanied by the school's president, dean, and a faculty member, were going to Washington to observe the PPC because, as students, they were interested in civil rights legislation and not necessarily because they were in sympathy with the PPC. The FBI after receiving this list of names from the college administrator turned around and indexed all the students.

"Fisur" or physical surveillance was used in this surveillance. (Generally conducted by military intelligence because Hoover had only a handful of black agents). [Checked against the Bureau's Black Nationalist Photo Album]

The Mule Train. Hoover was slightly obsessed w/ intelligence on the mule train. At most it only had about 50 PPC marchers at any one time. But while the train was in Mississippi, for example, the Jackson FO assigned 14 agents, one supervisor, and a network of informants (one with the mule train itself) in an around-the-clock surveillance of this caravan. Hoover received daily summaries on the condition of the mules, how they were shod, the repair and maintenance of the wagons, and the cost of rented tents for overnight encampment. And the names of black farmers who provided their land for these overnight stays. FBI reports on the mule train were routinely disseminated to the U.S. Army, Secret Service, and any regional military intelligence groups. The Bureau followed the itinerary of the mule train throughout the South until it reached Alexandria, Virginia.

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My main point for the above is to provide a context for the nature and purpose of the thorough scrutiny the Bureau gave to the caravans. The officially stated Bureau position is that its information-gathering and reporting is devoid of conclusions and recommendations. That it has no political agenda of its own and simply observes and reports to the White House, Justice Department, or Congress and allows these authorizing components of government to draw their own conclusions. In the case of the caravans the Bureau peppered the federal bureaucracy with daily summaries that originated from Division Five, Domestic Intelligence division, headed up by William L. Sullivan.

These daily summaries disseminated throughout the government were almost pure invention--the contrived products of a disinformation campaign to manipulate the upper reaches of the government's perception of the Poor People's Campaign. They were a totally Hooverized version of the daily activities related to the caravans tailored to emphatically prove that the director's warning about the PPC's potential for violence was correct--the barbarians were at the gates!!!!

There is nothing new in Hoover and the FBI elites abusing their power to manipulate the political system to serve the director's own ends. Hoover had been doing that for years. What I found interesting in these summaries was a new emphasis in the FBI's threat assessment. There was a conscious downplay of the communist menace (seen w/ FNI's campaign against King) and a shift toward the new clear and present danger confronting Hoover's America. Now it was the Black Menace--dissident black nationalists--had replaced the Red menace as America's number one internal threat.

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Unfortunately for Hoover, the caravans proved to be an intractable source of frustration. By this I mean despite the fact that there were thousands of people moving across America's interstates toward the capital during the Month of May--and many of those in the PPC ranks were teenagers--there simply were no major incidents of disorders and violence. The only exception to this was the an incident in Detroit outside the Civic Center or better known as Cobo Area. This violence was precipitated by the Detroit mounted police.

[Do I want to give a bare bones outline of this situation?] Check with the time.

The reasons for this extraordinary discipline among the caravans were rested with at least several explanations.

Deal with the work of the Communisty Relations Service (CRS) Division of the Justice Department headed up by Roger Wilkins, the highest placed black man in the Justice Department. Mention how the CRS people interacted with the caravans.

And the SCLC caravan leaders were they were good. The business of self-policing that went on was impressive.

What^l becomes an interesting exercise for the researcher is to compare the FBI daily summaries to the White House and other branches of the government with the daily reports that the CRS people with the carvans set back to Wilkins at the Justice Department. This kind of exercise reveals in the most dramatic fashion the concocted nature of the FBI reports--they were full of baseless allegations, runors,

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distortions, exaggerations, half-truths, and lies.

Even the reports from the FBI FOs during May while the caravans were wending their way toward Washington iterated over and over again that there were no incidents, no violence or threat of violence; that the caravans were proceeding without trouble.

Read Hoover's May 24, '68 memo to All Personal. *Appended.*

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Handwritten initials

By Way of Conclusions

Conclusions

During Project POCAM the FBI marshalled its considerable forces to do everything it could to propagate the thesis that the Poor People's Campaign was instigated by a subversive conspiracy. Hoover and his top aides also used every opportunity to intensify the ^{3/4} siege mentality gripping the federal government as it faced the armies of the poor converging on the nation's capital. It is fair to say that ^{the} the Bureau worked tirelessly to shape the federal government's perceptions and relations with the PPC, a majority of whom were nonwhite citizens, with a massive disinformation campaign that cynically manipulated the facts to conform to the director's conspiracy theories and his ^{power} law and order values. In the starkest terms, Hoover and his executive officers used their power and influence within the federal bureaucracy to try and set the government and the SCLC's poor people's movement on a collision course. It was a shameful and intolerable fact of American democracy that legitimate and pressing social issues brought to Washington for a fair hearing had to run ^{the} the gauntlet of FBI wrecking tactics.

It is impossible to gauge how severely the FBI damaged the PPC's credibility with government leaders, but it would be naive to think that its impact was inconsiderable.