

March 21, 1940

Dear Cameron,

Enclosed is an innocuous-looking bill which, I believe, is a really good story. It has never been used and I have arranged for you to get a break of at least a day on it.

This bill is an amendment to the census law which, had it been enacted, would have made available to the FBI, Army and Navy Intelligence all the confidential information contained in the census questionnaires. What is, the questionnaires themselves would be available to these three investigative units of the government. All three are antilabor and reactionary as hell. It seems as though the information in which there would be greatest interest by these units is the laien information.

Here is the story of this bill. It is really a J. Edgar Hoover story and thus far is the only new thing I have been able to turn up. I am, however, working on other things which I expect to be able to send you soon.

First let me tell you what happens to legislation proposed by the government departments and you will see how I got it and why nothing ever came of it.

Whenever any Department desired to recommend legislation it sends copies to the government comptroller. He, in turn, sends copies to every member of the cabinet. They comment, etc. The enclosed copy came from one of these worthies whose identity I regret I promised to keep secret as one of the conditions of getting it.

This bill was the recommendation of Mr. Justice Frank Murphey, the great civil libertarian. He was interested in it by J. Edgar Hoover. It is really Hoover's bill. This has been checked at the D.J. itself and is definite. The bill was stopped before it was even set in type. There seems to be no chance that it will be offered at least in time for this census.

I have obtained a promise that no use will be made of this until the day after your 5th issue comes out, that is, until the end of the week after next, about 4/5. This was rather difficult, in view of the fact that the person from whom I obtained it was rather inclined to release it for a big play.

There is sure to be a hell of a fuss when this gets to the floor of the Senate, as it certainly will. At that time, however, it will be possible for you to claim credit.

To J. Edgar this bill would have meant a real boom in the card-index business! His 4,000,000 would have jumped as rapidly as it has since the earlier time he mentioned it, early in the 20s

when it numbered 450,000. It would also be a boon to Dies and his gang, especially the anti-alien bunch.

Also enclosed is a copy of the AG's press release on the abandonment of wire tapping. What this really says is that the FBI has been violating the law since 1934 anyway and now they are going to not violate the law, at least officially. Nothing is said about over-zealous agents who might, in a frenzy of duty, make use of the equipment that is hanging around. This statement also says that other government departments which tap wires will have to keep it a secret from the Department of Justice if they want their cases presented in court. The last sentence on page three can be construed to mean that the phones of members of Congress have been tapped by the FBI in the past.

Last week I told Miss Kay that there was some background stuff available in Uncensored. In case she has any use for it, a copy is enclosed. Not copyrighted.

The wire-tapping investigation, as I told Miss Kay last week, was approved. \$15,000 and the power to draw on the executive branches of the government for personnel will enable them to do a complete enough job if they want to. This inevitably means an investigation of the FBI. Bert Wheeler is chairman of the Interstate Commerce Committee of the Senate, which is now empowered to do the investigating. It seems probably that Wheeler will designate a subcommittee to do the work in the name of the full committee. Senator Green of Rhode Island will not be a member of the committee although regular Congressional practise is for the authors of resolutions to head committees because he is not a member of the full committee.

Toward the middle of next week I'll be able to send you something on the index files, plant protection, etc.

If you want me to get the Smith Committee stuff used ~~on~~ the floor don't forget to send me a set of proofs as soon as you can. If this is done ( i.e., a speech by a Congressman) it should give you a nice boost and an authoritative rep.

How's everything going? I hope your circulation is good.

P.S. Please send my some dough

Harold ~~W~~berg

The other promise I made was that you would not use this before the issue of two weeks hence, that which will get here in Washington at the present schedule on April 4. I would, of course, have preferred no strings attached, but that could not be.