Dave, Jerry and Gerry, re Army spying on blacks, World War II through the Poor Peoples Campaign, or should I say Federalist Papers # 25 updated? HW 3/27/93

Last Sunday's (3/21) Memphis Commercial Appeal carried a lengthy series of articles described above. I heard about it on the CBS radio morning news that Sunday morning at 1 a.m. but it was missing from that newscast at 4 a.m. and I did not hear it repeated again until Cong. John Lewis made a public demand (3/22) for the Army to disclose all such records of for the appropriate House and Senate committees to hold hearings on it. I saw nothing in the WaPost but AP carried a story on what Lewis said that appeared in the local papers. (3/24)

Sunday evening (3/21) my friend Wayne Chastain, Memphis lawyer and former Press-Scimitar reporter, phoned me to tell me of this story. He went out and got another paper and clipped and sent me the stories. They are quite surprising for that reactionary paper and they are not surprising in leaving out any details of the most significant Memphis angle, the Army's spying on King at the time he was assassinated.

Digression for the record and about those papers, afternoon edition closed down, Scripps Hoard ownership. Wayne met with me often and into the early morning when I was in Memphis. We met publicly, usually in the restaurant of the Albert Pick Motel, where Bud Fensterwald, Jim Lesar and I usually satyed, Jim and I when Bud was not there. Jim spotted overt surveillance on us and his mail from the Supreme Court was torn open before he got it. (My room was bugged) Wayne was fired. A different reason was given but I believe it was over his public association with me, much more than that on any other reporter. Only the out-of-town press met with me nights. The settlement the papers gave him enabled him to go to law school. When we met Wayne told me about observing unmarked cars loaded with communications equipment outside the church in which King extemporised his Mountain Top speech the night before he was killed. Aside from the briefest mention of Army surveillnaces on King at that time with a picture of some equipment in an autho, there is no further mention of this most significant Memphis angle. The stories nonetheless are quite significant. It is too early to learn from Jerry whether the college has the equipment for copying full newspaper pages. If I cannot get this copied for you that way it will be quite awkward to use. 3 full pages + parts of 2 others

As soon as I heard the newscast I wrote the Commercial Appeal asking for a copy of the story and for copies of the records they got under FOIA or in the alternative the identification of their request so it can be duplicated without paying search fees and without delay. As of yesterday's mail, no response.

Aside from tracing the history of this paranoid Army domestic intelligence, which at the beginning included King's materanl grandfather and then his father, the stories contain tidbits of interesting information. Like when Spingarn headed the NAACP he was a formal Army informer on it, his associates and others and he even gave the Army its membership list.

The Army even trained the Klan in Mississippi and it collaboated with military as did other dangerous groups of the far right. The Klan training was military.

There is much that relcates to this Army activity that is not mentioned and probably was

not known to the reporter, Thompkins. The Army was involved in other domestic activities. It provided strikebreakers for some of the most spectacular strikes and massacres of that early period, just before and continuing after World War I. As did the American Legion and as the FBI helped.

I have a dim recollection of our knowledge on the Senate Civil Liberties Committee of the Army-Klan relationship. I'll see if my friend Sol has a clearer recollection.

I also believe, although I'm not now absolutely certain, that the National Guard also was deeply involved in anti-labor and possibly other domestic activities.

When I have copies I'll sent them. The story is well worth careful readings and possible class uses.

The Army's spying ranged from electonic to shadowing as described in these stories.

Preparing this story represents a considerable investment, as the paper indicates. It is not likely that any local paper would make so large an investment for a non-local story. The Memphis part, particularly what the paper had on the spying at the time of the King assassination, is barely indicated although it is the part that got the major attention on the CBS network news for which it was not a local story. In thinking about how strange this is I recalled what Chastain told me, that the editor under whom the work was done, most of it, was killed in an auto accident. Angus McEachern (pronounced McCarran) succeeded him. As Chastain commented when I noted how radical a departure from this paper's past even interest in such a story is, speaking of McEachern, "Why he used to work for the FBI!" (I think as a clerk while going to college.) I believe that it is McEachern who dictated that all that is obviously missing be omitted. After all that investment he could not, especially just as he was beginning as executive editor, kill the entire story. So he had almost all that relates to Memphis omitted. I recall nothing that any white would object to having reported. While the story makes reference to the activities of and reports from and to the Army Intelligence 111 unit at Fort McPherson, Ga., it makes no reference to what those files hold, if from no other source, from the FBI: the FBI's domestic spying in Memphis copies of which were routed there and the reports of the Memphis police spying included in those FBI reports. The Memphis police "red" squad stated in a lawsuit for its domestic spying that it had destroyed all copies. If so, the FBI's and those of the military would seem to be the only copies extant.

What also seems odd is that the reporter was so uninformed on the subject in general that he says the Poor Peoples Campaign was in support of the sanitation workers. And these editing were so ignorant they did not catch this.