

# Discharged CIA Workers

12-17-76

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If working for the CIA is lonely, job hunting after being laid off by the spy agency is hardly a step "in a from the cold," according to several former CIA employees.

Wesley Wright, age 49, father of three, is still looking for work more than three years after he was declared "surplus" by the agency during a major cutback in 1973. A graphics (photographs and drawings) analyst who lives in Kensington, he had worked for the CIA for 21 years.

A photographic technician, who was 51, the father of two, and who was dismissed at the same time as Wright, has found no work except briefly as an election judge, checking off voter lists on election day. He asked not to

be identified because he feared jeopardizing his job search.

Computer specialist Oliver Wendell Perry, 47, of Lanham, father of two, was forcibly retired from the agency after 23 years. He has since worked as a practice official with the Redskins for two seasons, as a ticket seller at the Capital Centre and more recently full time as a systems analyst for Prince George's County—but only, he says, through personal contacts, and not as the result of over 100 resumes he distributed.

The men emphasize that they were not spies. They performed what is called technical or "housekeeping" tasks (at the level of GS 11 to 13) at the agency's National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) in Southeast Washington.

"We didn't even know who the spies were," said the photo technician. "We played softball with them. I played duplicate bridge with them, but it was always on a first-name-only basis."

Yet these men, and others who were dismissed from similar positions during the same period, say they feel the weight of the agency's cloak-and-dagger nature when they gather to commiserate and to puzzle over why they were the ones who lost their jobs; what kind of recommendations the agency might be providing for them; what, if any, rights they had as employees; and what their years at the agency are worth in the outside world.

In addition to their ages (late 40s, 50s) and the tight job market, the men say that factors connected with their

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agency employment have hampered their quest for work.

They said, for example, the agency does not allow them to give the name of a superior under whom they actually worked, but only a personnel office where their records are kept. And they point out that news stories published at the time of the cutbacks quoted agency sources as saying the layoffs were to eliminate "deadwood" or "marginal performers," though the men insist that the agency never indicated to them any dissatisfaction with their work. They had no "black marks" on their record, they said. "The bad reputation the CIA got after we left didn't help either," Wright added. Some of the men said they feared that potential employers suspected they might be agency "plants."

"We were among those who thought the agency could do no wrong," said Eلفurino ("Lucky") Loiacono, of Adelphi, 51, another who was "surplused." "Then we found out they could do it to us."

At a recent gathering at the Kensington home of Maurice E. Baker, 58, who was forcibly retired after 17 years with the agency, five former NPIC employees agreed that they had been proud to work for the CIA and still felt loyal to it, "except for some of the people in it."

Loiacono, father of five, a "10-point" veteran, acabegory of reberans who receive preferential treatment in federal hiring him is one of those in the group who was eligible for early retirement benefits and who has managed to find another job. Still, he said,

the dismissal "hurt." He had worked at the agency for 21 years.

"I just don't like the way they did it, he said. "It's undemocratic, un-American. It's like getting a discharge from the military that is other than honorable."

Terse memos informed the selected NPIC workers that they were "excess to the manpower requirements" of their directorate. As CIA employees, they lacked the Civil Service armor that workers at other government agencies have.

They were among an unknown number of CIA employees who were cut from the payroll by then-director James R. Schlesinger during a shakup begun in 1973 (Informed esti-

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mates put the layoffs at between 1,000 and 1,800 employees of an estimated 18,000.) Some sources described this as the largest manpower reduction in the agency's history. The only other CIA cutback reportedly affected fewer than 300 clandestine agents in 1961, following the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

About a year ago, several of the former NPIC employees started getting together informally to discuss their frustrations, and possible courses of action.

Through their Washington attorney, Marion Edwyn Harrison, the group is pressing the CIA under the Freedom of Information Act for information about the reasons for their dismissal, their rights as employees, and openings in other jobs at the agency for which they might have been qualified. A decision on their requests pending in U.S. District Court.

Depending on what they can find

out about their legal standing, the men say, they may sue the agency for reinstatement.

The CIA declined comment on individual cases, but a spokesman for the agency confirmed that former employees are not allowed to give the name of supervisors as a recommendation, but only of a personnel office that spends full time responding to employer inquiries about former CIA employees. "Every inquiry is responded to," the spokesman said. "If the written record is not clear, at least one and if necessary more supervisors are contacted to get a reading on the qualifications of that person."

Wright said he knew of at least one instance in which the agency had given him a "good" recommendation. Another man, the photo technician, said, however, that one agency response about him that he saw answered "Don't Know" to a prospective employer's questions about duties and performance. The technician won-

dered if this one instance might not be "only the tip of an iceberg."

"I think these guys were screwed, frankly," says author Victor Marchetti, a former CIA employee turned agency critic. "They were victims of the clandestine bureaucracy which is slanted toward protection of the clandestine services and hidden behind special exemptions, executive order and so on."

Marchetti, who was acquainted with some of the men involved in the cutbacks, said he felt that while some of the higher level dismissals were in fact calculated to get rid of poor performers and trim down the size of the agency, "these guys were just cogs in the machinery . . . steam-rolled because they were in an out-of-the-way area of the agency."

"I think in some cases, depending on a man's background and job, the agency is duty-bound to give the treatment the person would have received under Civil Service."