

Hinckle's Journal

FBI's 'Dirty Tricks' in S.F.

By Warren Hinckle

The more you read about the FBI, the more you wonder what happened to the good old days of Lava Soap sponsoring the G-men doing these great things in peace and war on the radio and J. Edgar Hoover watching benignly over us, stuffing his bulldog jowls with his favorite dishes of chili and beans and lime pie.

No nostalgia in the newspaper this week. There was instead the amazing story, out of Alabama, that the FBI's supreme paid informant in the Ku Klux Klan during the '60s is now suspected of being more participant than observer in some of the most heinous crimes of the civil rights era.

There appears to be but one man in San Francisco, Sam Jordan, who has, officially, experienced FBI dirty tricks first hand. The "official" is because of the existence of memos from the San Francisco FBI office to J. Edgar Hoover suggesting ways to shaft Sam Jordan. These were declassified a few years ago, but nobody in town paid much attention then because the FBI still had its clean Lava soap image and San Francisco is usually the last place to surrender nostalgia about anything, especially the FBI.

The other night, out in Butchertown at his place of business, Sam Jordan was telling a friend his story of the FBI's war on him in peacetime San Francisco.

There was a party going on. It was Jordan's birthday and in his Third street bar, highball glasses were going up and down like pistons and there was hugging to music and primitive African folk food and veggies to beat the band.

Back in the Camelot years of the early '60s, Sam Jordan was the first black man to run for mayor of San Francisco.

For one thing, all records of his 1963 campaign disappeared mysteriously that year. The method of the disappearance is not dissimilar to umpteen reports of FBI "black bag jobs" to heist political documents. "I didn't think much of it at the time," Jordan said of the



SAM JORDAN
He ran for mayor in '63

burglary, "but back then I didn't know the FBI was out to get me."

Jordan is owed some paranoia. Of the many pounds of FBI dirty trick documents declassified under freedom of information and civil liberties lawsuits, his is the only San Francisco name that has surfaced as a primary target of the FBI.

(This is not to suggest Jordan was the only target; far from it. It is just that the FBI usually blacks out all the proper names when it releases documents, creating considerable guessing games as to whom what was done. Jordan, for some reason, was an exception. His name didn't get blacked out.)

Except that — in the parlance of the times — it was "uppity" in 1963 for a black man to run for mayor of San Francisco. Sam Jordan is hardly the ultra militant type of the FBI's political hit lists. "Why, Sam's conservative as hell," a friend said, trying to figure out why the FBI would do him dirt. Indeed, if anything Jordan's 1963 independent mayoral campaign was a kind of precursor to Jarvis-Gann — anti-professional politician, and heavy on self help and business-oriented community common sense.

The most controversial thing

Sam Jordan had done before running for mayor was to sing the Star-Spangled Banner in the center of the ring each time before he beat the dickens out of an opponent. He was the 1948 Golden Gloves light heavyweight champion here and became a popular businessman and community leader in Hunters Point.

Jordan's sin against the political theology being enforced Savorola-like by the FBI was apparently to number among his campaign workers volunteers from the Socialist Workers party, the small Trotskyist group that is still looking for ghosts under Stalin's seminary bed and considers the Communist party a bunch of conservative old fuddy-duddies with their heads buried in the sands of Russia. While the Trots actually adore electoral politics, the FBI in its wisdom considered them menace enough that it hired over 1300 informers to infiltrate and disrupt the barely 2500-member organization during the past three decades. The FBI's political burglaries and dirty tricks against the Socialist Workers in the bureau's notorious COINTELPRO plan are the basis for a \$40 million Socialist Workers lawsuit in New York, which currently is not going too well for the government.

Buried in the hundreds of pounds of FBI documents declassified as a result of the Socialist Workers lawsuit are memos from the San Francisco FBI field office requesting Washington for permission (granted) to disrupt Jordan's 1963 mayoral campaign. These documents surfaced to little notice in the left press in 1975 and were subsequently reprinted in a Socialist Workers party book on the FBI's

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"The letter should be handwrit-
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paper and contain the spelling
errors set out in the sample letter
... It should be mailed to him in
care of his place of business."

"Take the usual precautions to
prevent the preparation of the
letter and the subsequent mailing
of it from being associated with the
Bureau. Advise the Bureau when
the letter has been mailed and then
be alert for any tangible results,"
the instructions continued.

The FBI letter did not have its
desired effect. Jordan threw it out
with the empty liquor bottles in his
bar. He came in fourth in a field of
eight mayoral candidates with 3000-

SAC, San Francisco

10/21/63

Director,

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
INTERNAL SECURITY - SUB
DISRUPTION PROGRAM

Reurlet 10/10/63.

Authority is granted for you to prepare and then
anonymously mail the letter set out in relet to Sam Jordan
who is running for the office of Mayor of San Francisco as an
independent Negro candidate.

The letter should be handwritten on a cheap grade
of tablet paper and contain the spelling errors set out in
the sample letter enclosed with relet. It should be mailed
to him in care of his place of business.

Take the usual precautions to prevent the preparation
of the letter and the subsequent mailing of it from being
associated with the Bureau. Advise the Bureau when the letter
has been mailed and then be alert for any tangible results.

NOTE:

The anonymous letter is ostensibly from a longshoreman
who wants to vote for Jordan because of Jordan's strong stand
for Negro rights but the writer is concerned because of all the
known Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members who are running Jordan's
campaign. The letter indicates unless Jordan gets rid of the SWP
members, many people who don't want to be branded as a "Red" will
not support Jordan. The writer of the letter indicates therein he
knows Arthur Harer, a main spokesman for Jordan, and if the writer
identified himself, Harer could make things tough for the writer
on the waterfront. The letter has definite disruptive potential.

FBI's J. Edgar Hoover's instructions on the letter to Sam Jordan,
reprinted from "COINTELPRO — the FBI's Secret War on
Political Freedom," published by Vintage Books

plus votes. Jack Shelley caught the
golden ring that year.

There were other dirty tricks.
During the campaign, Jordan found
himself hassled by the Alcoholic
Beverage Control people, who said
they were receiving phone calls
from black women complaining
that he was serving minors. Then
some friends in the military told
him the word was out that his Third
street bar was off-limits, which,
Jordan says, it wasn't. Then, one
night, Jordan's campaign records
disappeared.

"I still can't see where the FBI
considered me any sort of a politi-
cal threat," Jordan said. "If you ask
me, doing all that to me was racist,
pure and simple."

According to COINTELPRO
documents released thus far, the
San Francisco FBI office during the
'60s was hardly an enclave of pro-

NAACP sentiment. Many of its
written opinions would fit into an
Earl Butz monologue. "The two
things foremost in the militant
Negro's mind are sex and money,"
San Francisco advised Washington
in 1968. "The first (sex) is often
promiscuous and freely shared.
White moral standards do not apply
among this type of Negro."

* * *

"I wouldn't run for dogcatcher
now. I've had it with politics," Sam
Jordan was saying on his birthday
night.

He's tending to his catering
business and his Hunters Point bar,
but can't quite yet forgive and
forget about the FBI.

He was delighted when an FBI
buff at the party told him that the
Bird Man of Alcatraz once sold J.
Edgar Hoover a sparrow dyed
yellow and told him it was a canary.