

Dear Dave, King-Memphis FBI files

8/11/77

I have gone through the four FBI HQ "Invaders" files and the first two of five on the Memphis Sanitation Workers' strike. The Memphis files are much more extensive. I understand they are being processed for me now.

Taken in perspective, after all that has come out on the FBI this is a truly exceptional self-portrait of it. In some ways it is indicative of a determined effort to build an authoritarian society. Without any doubt the most extensive personal files on the most minor of people were being accumulated.

But imagine it having any interest at all in a strike of a mere 1,000! If these had not been blacks do you think for a minute there would have been this interest, this extravagance with money and manpower, this elaborate record-keeping?

And feeding the trivia to the AG and the White House long in advance of King's first trip there.

That the black community supported the black workers and saw in their struggle a possibility of improving the entire community make it a "racial matter." That a preacher was going to attend a Christian peace conference in Prague caused Washington to keep writing such words as Czech, Germany, Prague, etc, when his name was in a typed report that reached Washington. Or course this red-baiting effort is always visible.

They reported everything, even that militant preachers sought them out to caution that the excesses of the local police were radicalizing the community and giving support of the community to the minuscule number of alienated young ones who were crazy-radical.

The Invaders never were a factor except in noise and blackmail potential. But the effort that went into the FBI's coverage is incredible. It continued after they ~~ceased~~ ceased to exist then resumed in two other files as the remnants formed two other in-sequential groups.

Even when most of them were under criminal charges and made ineffectual, if they ever were anything else.

Efforts were made to tie them in with such better-known organizations as the Panthers.

The amount of cross-filing alone is simply incredible.

If anyone ever wants to purge the files it will be impossible. These records were distributed widely, to the military even and the Secret Service, besides countless FBI files and other Departmental units like Internal Security.

There is an exceptional opportunity for scholarship here. I mean as a separate study. It is a picture of the FBI in peace-for war.

Hastily,