

Wells Don. Intel

9/5/77

Dear Dave,

Over a period of several heavily-interrupted days I have gone over five volumes of Memphis FBI Field Office files on the sanitation-workers strike. It is simply incredible stuff of considerable historical and political-science importance.

I'm sorry I was not able to make full and detailed notes. I just do not have the time. However, I have made some copies. (I'm keeping my "originals" intact for you.) I've made or rather will make copies to illustrate. I think that I'll have to have a chapter or part of one on this. I've cut back on the copies because the costs are getting to be fantastic for us. Just samples for the future and what I may use in writing. I've set up a separate writing file not to disturb the originals.

I'm not taking time to organize a few thoughts. I'm writing on a "rest," after one of my walks for the circulation, while still sweating. Off the top of the head, as they pop out, these few thoughts.

This is the FBI is a classic strike-breaking role. Not the violence part- the labor spy part. Reminds me of years ago when I investigated these agencies. Same information sought and reported.

This is also a unique view of the FBI, of what it does that is unknown in Washington's bureaucracy outside the FBI's. It uses any and all excuses to engage in a really vast domestic-intelligence operation, all carefully indexed in the field offices, not HQ.

The Memphis sanitation workers strike was a minor matter until King was interested in lending support. This operation began when nobody had heard of the strike of about 1000 blacks. It began with their interest in "RACIAL MATTERS," the caption of a file code that also includes bombings, this being the FBI mind. Then they have all sorts of other file captions, by name, by organization, etc. And for all the organizations of blacks. Black is radical, radical is to be filed and watched.

One wonders where all the manpower came from and what else the FBI was able to do, particularly with so much of this after the assassination, immediately afterward when the Memphis FBI should have been so busy. I guess the answer is they were not really that busy on the assassination, this domestic-intelligence operations being more important to them. They even used criminal informants on this strike for political information.

Real dragnet type stuff. They get a report some kid is giving out the Sayings of Chairman Mao and it does not have to have any connection with the strike - they file it under the strike and open a Memphis file on the Progressive Labor Party because the New York Field Office had reported the PLP expressed support for the Memphis strike. Logic, FBI kind. By the way, I'm not joking. This did happen, this way.

Everything went into the sanitationstrike file if it was black and political. All local blacks supported the strike so I guess this was their basis.

Jesse Jackson was there? Chicago FO provided a letterhead memorandum on Jesse Jackson. A white preacher in a black church and supporting the strike? He had to be investigated and he was, all the way through immigration to Canada, where he came from. (Harold Middlebrook is his name.)

The state of mind is reflected in all. Even to calling one of two black brothers of college age "a good boy." The thought police do not want him contaminated, that is his thoughts and their reflection in his acts.

I don't know what the legal authority for this kind of national police work is, if any.

It was closely coordinated with the local red squad, called both Intelligence and Inspectional. Are you beginning to get a notion why those files really were burned when the Vietnam Vet was about to gain access to those on him? Most of it was between FBI agents Lawrence and Lowe and Lt. Arkin. Both ways. With virtually every federal intelligence

agency receiving a copy. All the military ones, too. Copies to HQ not uncommonly 11 of each record. Dozens of files in Memphis for each one. I think in once case I counted a total of more than 50 copies of a domestic-intelligence record. The code number of each field office file is on the copy sent to FBIHQ.

Once King expressed interest they were on him wherever he was. From LA they had him so closely watched they were getting information from even airlines and airport guards. In Louisiana the local sheriffs reported on his travels when it was expected he'd go to Memphis. They had his own headquarters as a source, I think I've spotted two separate FBI informers inside the Atlanta SCLC, but not by name. When King was getting over the shock of the 3/28/68 violence in the Rivermont (I have the story of how he got there and why now) Atlanta was feeling HQ and Memphis what was in King's mind as he expressed it to those he trusted. They had agents, meaning their informants, not special agents, inside other SCLC offices, like New York. (They even allowed a special expense account when Chicago sent a special black informer down to Memphis.) They had their ways of knowing what Stanley Levison and Harry Wachtel were thinking, saying and advising and it is reported.

Upper middle-class white women protested Loeb's conduct (two did not support the strike) and went public, being reported in the papers. The story is sent to Washington, Memphis indexes every name. Students? Every one named is indexed. Student meetings? They are covered, too. (School officials among informants. I have the names of one or two. Business and administration offices good sources, with access to records, used.)

Is there a "Liberal Club" at MSU? Naturally the country will be wrecked if it is not a subject of FBI interest.

All strike activities were covered, thoroughly. Let a couple of pickets appear - or be reported planning to appear - and HQ got a teletype.

Preachers were sources. So was the local vice president of the NAACP. I am sure some of the preachers sought to get a message to the FBI and the local authorities this way but it is a fact that they were FBI sources.

125 black preachers met with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and national and internal security required FBI interest. When the "Community on the Move for Equality" organization, MOVE, was organized and became the backbone of the strike and looked ahead for other improvements it became a special target. There is one long report of a meeting so detailed I suspect the secretary was the source. All the names, the finances, the candidates - totality, including of what happened at the meeting. Finances, too. This particular report was three months after the strike ended.

Was there police brutality? There was. Did they kill and then lie, initially protected by the FBI? Yes, I recall a student named Payne, high school. Shot him and first claimed they caught him looting and when that would not hold that at his home he came for them with a butcher knife. All kinds of false charges filed against activist blacks, from jay-walking to night-riding and all sorts of minor and major offenses. Even traffic tickets. (It got so bad some of the cops were suspended.)

The police story is that King and those close to him joined the 3/28 March after it was gone for about a block. When they realized they would be accused of participating in a violent march they left it. The first vehicle they saw was a truck, I believe a meat truck. The driver refused to take them away. The next vehicle was one with two black women in it. They agreed and one of King's associates slid into the driver seat. A Lt. Nichols of the MPD offered them escort. They asked to be taken to the Sheraton-Peabody, usually called only the Peabody. This is downtown, the downtown was not safe and the cop so stated. He then led them to the Rivermont. But Washington FBI was unwilling to accept the realities. They ordered Memphis to find the women and see if they would say that King had said he was in some way connected with the violence he preached against and abhorred....Or does this kind of FBI HQ mind (Sullivan's) explain the domestic intelligence operations?

Best,

Dear Jim, Attached WFO 157-1092-315, 1996 Compliance

9/5/77

In this case there was reason to ask WFO to consult its files for records on Ernest Smith, whose offense was supporting the sanitation strike and its supporters after King was assassinated and before the strike was settled.

In the WFO sanitation files there are many records routed routinely to WFO without this kind of association. It reminds me of what I'm sure I've told you, that the WFO was used as a hidden repository of political stuff near but physically outside FBIHQ.

I am certain we have received Memphis records that were sent to Washington and were not provided from HQ files. There are also records of Washington origin of which we have no Washington copies. These are important relating to phone calls from DC to Mps. In the enclosed memo to Dave I refer to one of these calls, by Sullivan, to try and rig a case of King espousing violence in Memphis.

WFO files will also be important in personal files cases.

If they have given me all the Memphis Sanitation Worker's file they have given nothing about Harris. He should be in both Sanitation and ~~Stagg~~ Murkin files. Hq and Mps. Not given to us. They would have tried to get his right name. I'm inclined to believe it is Joe Paisley. No indication of any such inquiry or reporting.

With regard to other records I cannot be as certain but I feel confident that we have a number from Memphis that were not provided from HQ files.

This also would seem to mean that they had no HQ file on Ray's escape. Actually they did because I have the Memphis file of clippings that were forwarded to HQ.

It is certain there was a HQ subfile or part of an escape file that held the complaints against the FBI, including by Governor Blanton but HQ did not provide that. In that case they can't claim the records were generated after they completed HQ supposed compliance because that was done and they finished in August.

Reminds me: there should be more on my public appearances on this, if not from Dallas then from NYC, DC or HQ or all. Nothing new on personal files, no second instalment.

I'm sure what I've said about the other Memphis files applies to those on the Invaders, what was sent to DC (HQ whether or not WFO) and was not provided from the HQ Invaders file.

This Smith record is one you can show Hartingh if you are so inclined. Remember he said they do not index. This directs that Smith's name be indexed. I can provide many and better samples. However, this has other FOIA importances: like sticking to FBIHQ indexes when the stuff is in the field offices and indexed there not in HQ.

The Lawrence whose name is written on the attached is William H. I'd have to check my records but I think he was in charge of the WFO's intelligence operations, since retired and teaching college in the Bristol Va-Tenn. area.

I can only wonder how much they are still hiding.

est,

Dear Dave,

9/7/77

In writing you on the fifth I think I said I'd send you a sample of the straight labor spying/ domestic intelligence work of the FBI from a single file, that of the Memphis Field Office on the Sanitation Workers' strike.

Here it is.

The time and cost of all the copying is getting to be burdensome so after you read it, if you'd like copying it, please return it. I'll attach a carbon to let me know I want it for my Invaders file.

Note the date- long after the strike was settled, after the King assassination, and at a time when the blacks were merely seeking decency.

Look at the number of different FBI Memphis Field Office files in which there were copies. (Most of those blacked out are, I think, names of people, the rest of organizations.)

The author appears to have been in charge of Memphis FBI intelligence operations. Prior to receiving these records I had learned this, I think a year and a half ago. He is now retired, teaching college.

RM = Racial Matters.

While I've forgotten some of the specific contents of these pages the same files show repeated predictions of the violence and repeated provocations of violence by the Memphis police. This begins in these records prior to the 3/28/68 violence, which when it came was exactly as a criminal informant warned was the only way it could. This was 20 days earlier.

Yes, the FBI used its criminal informants for these political inquiries, too.

Best,