

Reputed Mafia Figure Linked to Picketing of F.B.I.

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By CRAIG R. WHITNEY

Associates of Joseph Colombo, a reputed boss of organized crime, said yesterday that he was the man behind the picket lines that have been set up nightly around Federal Bureau of Investigation headquarters here for the last month.

They confirmed the view of law - enforcement authorities who say that Colombo's close lieutenants appear on the picket line, at 69th Street and Third Avenue, almost every night, along with scores of Italian-Americans and others. The pickets carry signs and shout slogans denouncing the alleged defamation of Italian-Americans by the F.B.I.

Colombo himself, in an interview yesterday, gave a few details of how the protests had been organized. He said:

"We march cold and warm; we've never stopped. We respect the F.B.I.—it's the greatest organization in the country. But they're framing our children and harassing our pregnant women, and we want them to stop."

The picketing started on the night of April 30. It has since become so noisy at times that tenants and the owners of three nearby apartment buildings

The New York Times (by Neal Boenzi)

A group of demonstrators outside the Supreme Court on Centre Street yesterday morning Continued on Page 51, Column 1

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have sued to stop it. A state judge will visit the picket lines at 8 o'clock tonight to see if the crowds are as disorderly as the neighbors charge.

It was on April 30 that Joseph Colombo Jr., 23, was arrested by F.B.I. agents in Brooklyn.

He was charged with conspiracy to melt silver coins, allegedly extorted from a coin dealer, and to sell the resulting, more valuable, silver ingots.

His father, who is said to be the head of the faction-ridden Mafia "family" of the late Joseph Profaci, and a member of the Mafia's national commission as well, showed up on the picket line that night, but not the next two or three nights.

At that time his associates kept his own participation in the background. But law-enforcement authorities now believe that though others are free to join, it is his demonstration, and the pickets are there, because he wants them to be.

This is not always obvious, because the alleged defamation of Italians by the F.B.I. is something many people—not just those of Italian lineage—believe is a problem.

But during the last month or so, Colombo said, he has been on the picket line himself every

night, and yesterday he, his two sons, Joseph and Anthony, and several hundred pickets jammed into Supreme Court in Manhattan to answer the lawsuit.

The audience hardly made a sound, but it was raucous with color. Some of the men waved little American and Italian flags and wore green-white-and-red badges with slogans like "Italians are beautiful" and "We want equal rights."

They listened while their lawyer (and Joseph Colombo Jr.'s), Barry Ivan Slotnick, told Justice George Starke, "The defendants in this courtroom have all taken a day off to maintain the last semblance of dignity they have—their right of free speech."

Justice Starke told the crowd that "they impressed me with their reasonable conduct here," and they said in unison, "Thank you, your Honor."

The judge then said he would postpone a decision on whether to regulate and limit the demonstrations until after he had seen them himself tonight.

Rights Group Involved

A visitor in the courtroom asked Nat Marcone, who has acted as a spokesman for the pickets from the beginning, to identify a well-dressed man who was holding a sort of court of his own on the other side of the bar from Justice Starke. "That's Joseph Colombo Sr.," he said.

Mr. Marcone, who lives in Staten Island, said that an

organization called the Italian-American Civil Rights League, with offices in the Park-Sheraton Hotel, was the principal group in the protest.

It was organized, he said, by Joseph Colombo Sr., Anthony Colombo, Joseph Cantalupo, son of a Brooklyn real estate dealer for whom Joseph Colombo Jr. works, and Joseph De Sico, a Colombo associate, among others.

Colombo Sr. said: "We usually march from 4 to 11, and usually only after supper. We get the people in buses, cabs and private cars and bring them in."

Three busloads arrived at the court house in Foley Square from Brooklyn yesterday.

"If I do something, then I deserve to pay the penalty," Colombo Sr. said. "But the F.B.I. shouldn't harass my children and relatives because of what I do."

A Charge and a Denial

His son Joseph Sr. said that F.B.I. agents came to his home to arrest him in April and found his pregnant wife there—"They pushed the screen door in on my wife," he said. The F.B.I. denies this.

Anthony Colombo said that other agents had told him: "We got your father, we'll get you next." He added: "But this only makes me stronger. The F.B.I. has infiltrated the Black Panthers and student radical groups. If there's a Mafia, why haven't they been able to infiltrate that?"

Most of the demonstrators who were interviewed yesterday in front of the court house were from Brooklyn. "I found out about the demonstrations at Joe's Bar on Avenue U," said Anthony Amoroso of 2250 East Fourth Street. "Some F.B.I. agents there asked me if I was going to go." He did early in May.

Emilio Gerardi of Coney Island said he was in court because his son was arrested by the city police two months ago.

Giovanni D'Errico, a 65-year-old who lives at 23A Second Street, Brooklyn, said he was on hand "because I'm there [on the picket line] every day."

After the court proceedings yesterday, Anthony Colombo, using a bullhorn, rounded up passengers for the buses, and they left for Brooklyn, housewives and workmen, about noon.

A law-enforcement source said later:

"Colombo is upset because he hasn't got more publicity out of this, and until he does, it's hard for him to end it gracefully.

"A lot of the people on the line don't realize what's behind all this. They think it's a legitimate gripe. But Colombo's button-men are the ones that got the people there."



The New York Times

Giovanni D'Errico gives victory sign outside courthouse