

Former FBI agent tells about IRS unit

Special tax unit examines finances

WASHINGTON (LNS) — "Because of the way some of these people behave in their everyday affairs, it's reasonable to believe some of them may be violating the tax laws."

"These people" that Leon Levine, public information officer for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), is referring to are not, as might be expected, big businessmen or the Mafia, but radicals.

Levine's statement was in response to recent charges by former FBI agent Robert N. Wall that the Internal Revenue Service has a special seven-man unit whose sole job is to collect information on "extremist" political organizations and people.

Johnnie Walters, Commissioner of the Internal Revenue, acknowledged the existence of the unit after Wall, who quit the bureau in the spring of 1970, blew the whistle. Walters claimed that he did not know much about the special IRS unit's operations. He found out about it only a week or so before when the possible reorganization of the agency was discussed.

In an article which will appear in the *New York Review of Books* Jan. 27, Wall said that he first went to the IRS for information on one radical he was investigating in the spring of 1969. He was taken to a soundproof room in the basement of the IRS building.

"The room had no name on the door," Wall said, "and it had several locks. Inside were two guys who seemed surprised that I had shown up. On a long table in the middle of the room were piles and piles of manilla folders. It turned out they were investigating the tax records of these people and my man's folder was on the table."

According to Wall, the IRS investigators explained they had assembled files on "antiwar people and draft-card burners and black militants." They said they were preparing to open investigations on all of them, having just started they were unsure exactly where they were going.

Since then they've gotten more sure of themselves, though. The IRS unit shifts out the sources of radical's money and passes on the information to the regular tax enforcement personnel at Internal Revenue. Some of the things the investigators hunt for are whether the organization's leaders have filed tax returns and whether the organization itself is claiming a tax-exempt status that it does not actually have.

The long haired and moustached former agent says that he is so disenchanted with this country that he plans to move to a farm in Nova Scotia. He did not limit his embarrassing disclosures to the Internal Revenue Service's harassment of radicals.

He said that he joined the bureau

in 1965 after graduating from St. Bonaventure University and serving time in the navy because he felt that the FBI was "above all a protector of the innocent public." But he came away convinced that "the bureau has become an ogre."

Wall resigned in a dispute over an investigation of the Center for Black Education. "My supervisor insisted it was a training ground for guerrillas. I was satisfied it was a school for black studies," he said. "After I sent in a memo recommending we close the case, a note came back saying either the agent was naive or the informants had duped him."

Among the FBI schemes that Wall exposed were attempts to sow dissension within various left groups. "In one case we addressed a letter to the leaders of the National Mobilization Committee which said that the blacks of Washington D.C. would not support the upcoming rally of the group (in 1969) unless a \$20,000 security bond was paid to a black organization in Washington. At the same time we instructed some informants we had placed in the black organization to suggest the idea of a security bond informally to leaders of the organization.

"The letter we composed was approved by the bureau's counterintelligence desk and was signed with the forged signature of the leader of the group. Later, through informants, we learned that the letter had caused a great deal of confusion

and had a significant effect on the planning for the march."

Agents in Washington also tried to confuse peace demonstrations, said Wall, "by handing out leaflets giving misleading information about the time and place where the marchers were supposed to meet."

Wall's charges against the bureau have, according to the *New York Times*, been independently verified by reliable sources inside and outside the government. One source that the *Times* did not identify admitted "We do disrupt where possible. We do the same thing with the Ku Klux Klan. We do it only where there is a likelihood of violence, to reduce violence."

The source went on to say that with the exception of a 1967 march led by Martin Luther King, "there never was a peace march on

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of radicals

Washington that didn't have the potential for violence."

The FBI has also monitored bank accounts and gone through telephone company records — all without the subpoenas required by federal law. He gave as one example an investigation that he carried out on the Institute for Policy Studies, a left-liberal think tank in Washington, D.C.

"The Institute caught my attention shortly after I began investigating the New Left. Reports from FBI informants showed that many of the leaders and spokesmen of the antiwar and civil rights organizations called at the Institute when they visited Washington.

"I reasoned that if there were a conspiracy that linked all these groups, the Institute was the logical place to look for it." Wall closed the

investigation after he became convinced that the Institute was not "the secret mastermind of any conspiracy," but another agent later reopened the case.

He began monitoring the checking account of the Institute to determine where its money was going," reports Wall. "He asked for telephone company records and compiled a list of the Institute's long distance telephone calls. He attempted to place informants in the Institute as student interns and gathered every available paper published by it. Individual investigations were then opened on the people who worked for or received money from the Institute."

Richard J. Barnett, co-director of the Institute along with Marcus Raskin said that the Institute is considering taking legal action against

the Riggs Bank, the largest in Washington, for having made the records available without being served with a subpoena. Barnett said he didn't know the FBI was investigating IPS until he met Wall recently.

Wall made it clear that the bureau had no problem "in getting school records and hospital records — nothing is sacred. You could even get Social Security records, but you had to justify that quite heavily."

"It's repressive," Wall said of the bureau. "But repression is such a trite word no one listens to it. The continuation of even the fiction of two-party democracy requires that the bureau stop repressing grassroots, community involved groups. The biggest fiction is that the bureau is not political. It is a political force."