

FBI Records Reveal Widespread Surveillance of Students, Citizens

by Chris Lantry

The College's chief switchboard operator, the chief security officer, the chief of the Southwestern Police Department, the Southwestern Postmaster and his carrier were involved in FBI surveillance of teachers Professor David Bennett, according to copies of stolen Bureau documents in possession of The Phoenix. Another document, a newsletter entitled New Earth Voice, discusses the recruitment and payment of student informers.

The documents are part of more than 1,000 stolen in the March 8 burglary of the FBI office in Media, and circulated by a group calling itself the Citizens Committee to Investigate the FBI. The film describes the involvement of Mrs. Judy Paly, chief switchboard operator; Nancy Peabody, chief of campus security; William Williams, police chief; Charles Criss, postmaster, and his carrier in the surveillance of Bennett. (See page 4 for the text of the Bennett document and New Earth Voice.)

NO QUESTION

Justice Department sources stated in The Washington Post (March 10) that there is "no question" that the documents are copies of the files stolen in the Media burglary. The documents on Bennett were apparently compiled because the FBI had evidence he might contact or be contacted by the Southwestern media, Susan Lane and Katherine Power, named in connection with the slaying of a Boston politician during a lunch holding.

Assistant Cathedral Lewis Cook told he had spoken with Mrs. Paly, and "she says she is innocent." Mrs. Paly, in an interview, said she had nothing to add to the comments she made to Cook and President Robert B. Olson. In a telephone interview with The Washington Post (March 14), Mrs. Paly said she was "quoted in the FBI report," she told the FBI, "was questioned by several Bureau men" and that "she does not know him. She added that the agent had only asked if 'certain professors', whom usually he was checking, were or weren't." The Post also noted that Mrs. Paly denied agreeing to report to Bennett's long distance calls.

"That could cost me my job," she

said. "It would be a breach of ethics. I would never do that."

Peabody, when contacted by The Phoenix, said, "I'm not going to say a thing. Not a word. You'll have to go right to President Olson. There's no comment whatsoever, no matter who calls."

In another telephone interview with The Washington Post (March 10), Power said she would have to confer with the FBI agent before he answered questions. "Because, as I say, we are working together on this."

Copies of 14 of the stolen documents were received March 10 by Senator George McGovern (Dem., S.D.); Representative Patrick J. Buchanan (Dem., Md.); The Washington Post, and several other newspapers. The newspapers immediately turned the documents over to the FBI.

Claiming credit for the Media burglary, the Citizens Committee explained the reason for its action is a series of letters attached to the copies of the stolen records. The letters said the group was studying the rest of the files to determine "the nature and extent of surveillance and information carried on by this (Media) office of the FBI, particularly against groups

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and individuals working for a more just, humane and peaceful society.

"How much of the FBI's efforts are spent on relatively minor crimes by the poor and powerless?" they ask, and seek to determine "the extent of illegal practices by the FBI, such as overstepping jurisdiction, and the use of provocateurs and informers."

The Citizens Committee went on to explain, "We believe that a law and order which depends on intimidation and repression to secure obedience can have but one name, and that name is tyranny; we believe that citizens have the right to scrutinize and control their own government and its agencies; and we believe that the FBI has betrayed its democratic trust and we wish to present evidence for this claim to the open and public judgment of our fellow citizens."

In addition to the New Left Notes, the copies of the stolen files included memos from an FBI agent reporting on several Black Panther conversations, three memos on the National Black Economic Development Conference, a directive from J. Edgar Hoover ordering that Black student groups "organized to protest the demands of Black students" be added to files already under surveillance, and a list dated May, 1969, of 34 Southern Black students.

Watts police said the burglars gained entrance to the FBI office by forcing open an unused door and climbing onto a filing cabinet. They then jammed open the locked filing cabinets and searched the room.

Agents of the FBI are currently reviewing documents obtained in addition

to the stolen documents. The New York Times reported it had received information that agents of the bureau have been examining Xerox machines in the area in an attempt to determine the machine employed in the original copying of the files.

The Phoenix received its copies of the stolen records indirectly from a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based organization, Rivet. The organization was founded four years ago with the intention of promoting draft resistance efforts.

Justice officials charged in The Washington Post (March 16) that the 14 documents mailed to Congressmen and newspaper editors deliberately selected from among the 1,000 to create an impression that the FBI employed unscrupulous or illegal methods.

"Actually," one Justice said, "a full examination of the stolen documents reveals the FBI showed restraint rather than overreactiveness. They do excellent police work."

Attorney General John N. Mitchell initially urged publications receiving copies of the 14 documents temporarily to refrain from publishing them or giving that "distortion of this information could endanger the lives of many other persons known to persons engaged in investigative activities on behalf of the United States."