

# ON THE LINE

## Confidential Document Exposes Postal Union-Busting Plan

The *Minneapolis Star* recently obtained an inch-thick government document outlining procedures for spying on postal workers in the case of a strike. The July 21 issue carried an article by correspondent Randy Furst on the spy plan.

Postal workers aren't the only target—the union-busting methods outlined by the government are the very ones being used against the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization today.

The article from the *Minneapolis Star* follows.

In a secret memo to its supervisors throughout the country, the U.S. Postal Service lays out contingency plans for how to respond to slowdowns, walkouts or sitdown strikes. The plan gives

activities."

Supervisors also are asked to "record exact messages on picket signs" and "where possible, identify pickets by name and craft."

"If the pickets are non-employees, so identify them," the memo says, and "report, if available, statements made by named pickets and/or union officers to employees, customers and others who cross or attempt to cross picket lines."

The contingency plan warns supervisors of the possibility of "sitdown strikes," a tactic that has not been used in the labor movement since the 1930s.

In the event of a mass sitdown, the memo says that if employees "do not leave as instructed, security officers, if available, should be called to escort them from the property. If security officers are not available, assistance

Regarding Illegal Concerted Activities," also marked "restricted," advises managers that, as the strike deadline approaches, they should "increase the amount of time spent directly with the crew," check bulletin board postings frequently and record any pertinent conversations overheard in the workplace:

"Do keep notes (for a possible written report) of specifically who does what (was said, done, to whom) when (precise time), where (how close were you to what you are reporting about). The more detail you can remember and record the more useful your report will be.

"Do try to identify leaders of the work stoppage. Note those who: wave or call others off the job; shut down lines, machines or equipment; are the first to quit work; act as spokespersons.

"Do note precise words of any written material passed out or displayed. Get copies if possible."

The plan is "a textbook of the 1920s method on spying on the employees," said Fabian.

"You are dealing with an employer that has a mentality equivalent to that utilized by employers in the beginnings of the labor movement.

"One would think after being told what's in a document like this that one could not believe this is the United States of America."

Minneapolis post office spokesman Donald Sagar said he had seen some contingency plans, but could not comment on whether he had seen the one obtained by *The Minneapolis Star*. He said he could not confirm or deny its authenticity.

"Even if I saw it, I wouldn't want to make a comment," Sagar said. "From the standpoint of the subject matter I wouldn't want to comment on it."

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elaborate advice for recording what strikers say as well as taking photographs of pickets to be used later in procedures for firing and prosecuting any employees who strike, in violation of federal law.

"At the time of a crisis, such as an illegal job action," the memo says, "for any manager to 'bury his/her head in the sand' because of their desire not to get involved is unacceptable—not only unacceptable, but an abdication of their responsibility."

The inch-thick plan, marked "restricted information," repeatedly urges supervisors to identify any employees appearing to be strike leaders.

Gerry Fabian, Minneapolis-based representative of the American Postal Workers Union, was read portions of the memo Monday. He called it a "spy" document, advocating methods similar to those used against unions in the early years of the labor movement.

Post office officials would not confirm or deny the document's existence.

The plan says that supervisors should engage pickets in conversations and later write down what they said for possible use in prosecutions.

Under a section headed "gathering evidence," supervisors are told:

"If circumstances permit, ask union officers and pickets about the purpose of, and authorization for, their picketing activity. After talking with such persons—record and provide their names; provide dates, hours and places statements were made; provide names of any supervisory or Inspection Service witnesses."

If a strike starts and workers begin leaving their posts, supervisors are urged to "observe whether certain employees are leading the 'walkout' by calling or motioning to other employees," and to record names and addresses of union officials and "other employees who have appeared to be leaders of the strike ac-

should be requested from local authorities."

The document also says that postal employees writing letters to the editor or sponsoring advertisements in the press, radio, and TV may not be legally protected if the information published is "knowingly false, malicious, vulgar or disloyal to the Postal Service."

The memo does not define "disloyal."

Included in the memo are sample letters to be sent to strikers notifying them that they have been fined or face prosecution.

An attached memo for supervisors entitled, "Management Information

## SOLIDARITY DAY March on Washington SATURDAY, SEPT. 19

Sponsored by the AFL-CIO & other unions

### BUS FROM FLINT

Leaves Fri. night — Returns Sunday

Round Trip Cost — \$40

Call AFL Local 25 at 787-5381

to purchase your ticket.

This demonstration is expected to be one of the largest labor demonstrations in history.

## Labor Notes

The U.S. Postal Service paid a law firm more than \$400 an hour for help in negotiating the new contract with its 600,000 employees. That's 2,222.2 18¢ stamps worth per hour.

In Cleveland the Postal Service recently gave awards to ten employees who had not filed any grievances during a one-year period. The action prompted the Letter Carriers to file their own grievance with the NLRB, which ordered a halt to such awards.

Quote of the Month: "It's my understanding that when you strike, you have quit your job."—Daniel George, president of Teamsters Local 639 in Washington, D.C. George was referring to 19 employees of the local Teamsters Trust Fund, which pays health and pension benefits. The Trust Fund's employees went on strike after negotiations for a wage increase broke down. The workers, represented by the OPEIU, were sent mailgrams telling them they'd be "replaced" if they didn't report for work.

The Detroit Chapter of the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador (CISPES) has published a useful packet of documents on the trade union movement in El Salvador and the response of American unions to U.S. intervention in that country. Included are resolutions on El Salvador adopted by the Machinists, Ladies Garment Workers, Longshoremens, Clothing and Textile Workers, AFSCME, and the Chicago Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. For a copy of the packet send \$2.00 to CISPES, 5001 Evergreen, Dearborn, Michigan 48128.

March 7, 1932: Several thousand workers march on the Ford Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan, demanding jobs. The police open fire. Four are killed, two dozed are wounded. The wounded workers are arrested amid wild newspaper charges of communist insurrection.

The story of this event is told in *The Ford Hunger March*, by Maurice Sugar, published recently by the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, a non-profit organization. Sugar was the attorney for the arrested workers and for the families of the dead workers. He gives a fascinating account of this important chapter of labor history. Sugar later became general counsel for the United Auto Workers, and was also a songwriter. Two of his depression-era songs were the "Soup Song" and "Sit Down."

The book is available for \$6 (including postage) from the Meiklejohn Institute, P.O. Box 673, Berkeley, CA 94701. It's the first in a series on Studies in Law and Social Change. Another in the series will be *McCarthyism and the Labor Movement*.

