

Recently released FBI files disclose that ACLU had FBI run background checks

FBI files on ACLU General Counsel Morris Ernst reveal that Ernst used the FBI as an employment agency, asking them to run background checks on employees who worked in his private law firm. The FBI file reveals he had the FBI investigate every employee.

The FBI review indicated that Yetta Haber was a communist. The FBI review on Yetta Haber was requested on 1/30/47. FBI files do not indicate what action, if any, that Ernst took. Nor is any reason given for Ernst's request. It appears that Ernst's insatiable desire for 'dirt' on all his employees may have motivated his request, for no national security reasons are given. There is no attempt on Ernst's part to justify the request to the FBI, and everyone was checked in Ernst's law office.

Yet just twenty days earlier, Morris Ernst had requested an FBI check on just one employee, Helen Zipper. Ernst told FBI agents that he believed that Zipper was a communist plant, placed in his office to report on his anti-communist activities. Zipper's FBI check came on 1/10/47. At the end of the month, Ernst asked the FBI to check his entire staff. Ernst went on a fishing expedition. Ernst must have believed that the problem did not end with Helen Zipper. FBI files reveal that Ernst took action against Zipper, firing her for the unauthorized release of information, but is silent on the follow up action Ernst took to snoop on all his employees. In this case, the ACLU General Counsel is seeing a Red under every bed. Given the tenor of the times, it is ironic to see the lead counsel for the ACLU acting like a red baiting organization, and the FBI agents showing cooler heads prevailing. Again, the ACLU is acting like an extension of the national security state, and the FBI agents acting like your next door neighbor.

FBI agents make clear that the information they provided on Helen Zipper is 'strictly confidential', and that they had no derogatory information on Zipper, and nothing connecting her to the Communist Party. Yet Ernst went ahead and discharged her.

While publicly debating loyalty oaths and background checks, The ACLU General Counsel for 27 years, Morris Ernst, who, at this point in his life, apparently trusts no one he has hired at his law firm, is conducting a witchhunt, and using public monies to do it. Ernst, who was involved in so many questionable activities, and had so many questionable clients, had plenty of reason to hide a lot of information. If any employees of his law firm had any conscience at all, they would have plenty of reason to leak information. To do background checks on employees after they were hired, not as a condition of employment, amounts to eavesdropping on their personal life. Ernst's penchant for having personal information to blackmail people appears to be what he is after, thus giving him greater control over his employees.

The ACLU membership would never know that their famous General Counsel never believed in any of his pronouncements. He would run roughshod over any legal opponent, violating their civil liberties at every step.