



FBI Reforms Pondered After Hoover Retires



By EDWARD STARR JR. and ROBERT NOVAK

WASHINGTON—Politicians deeply worried about the future of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the days beyond J. Edgar Hoover view last week's abrupt departure of Casper D. DeLoach as a vital clue that illuminated the need for basic FBI reform.

There were signs of relief in Washington when DeLoach, No. 2 official in the bureau, bowed to intense pressure and suddenly announced his retirement at age 61, thus distancing himself from consideration as Hoover's successor. Had DeLoach ever succeeded Hoover (as seemed quite probable a few years ago), the charges against him of right-wing bias and blatant opportunism would have rocked and possibly wrecked the FBI.

But to serious students of basic FBI reform, DeLoach's fall is also for another, underlying their conviction that the frightening powers of Hoover's office must be radically reduced for the post-Hoover era. Moreover, there is growing feeling the next director should be more sensitive to the national political climate than Hoover has ever been.

What makes this so important today is the grim prospect in the years just ahead, with Communist rising and leftist terrorism intensifying. The FBI's role will be ever more difficult. The dilemma for the future FBI director will be to avoid blind repression while help restore the confidence of youth and the liberal community.

Whether anybody can surmount these problems is debatable, but critics of DeLoach know that he was not the man for this sensitive task. Espousing a rightist ideology inside the bureau, he has operated with great discretion in his Washington backrooms of business, journalism, and politics. DeLoach's closeness with the Johnson White House was so intimate that plans were afoot for ousting Hoover out and replacing him with DeLoach if President Johnson had been elected to another term.

But what worried DeLoach's critics most was his closeness to Hoover. A recent report during his 40-year tenure, who listed both protégés and intimates, ranked DeLoach as Hoover's closest confidant. Hoover has been away from his rooming. Although he is the driving force for DeLoach's resignation, Hoover is not unhappy over it.

DeLoach gave and Hoover, at age 74, determined to stay in power until forced out by death or physical disability, politicians of both parties close to the FBI are now looking hopefully toward the following reforms:

Reform No. 1: The current rule that often diminishes Hoover's rhetoric. Supreme Court Justice Byron White may come down to killing this prescription.

Reform No. 2: A specific time limit, perhaps one eight-year term, is regarded as essential for Hoover's successor. Although Hoover has become a fighting symbol to the American left, he has seldom changed his views. But in the time limit should the man with all the government's investigative clout might not, in the overwhelming view of politicians, to be beyond the authority of Presidents to remove him as, in effect, Hoover has been.

Reform No. 3: Reports on the FBI want it split into two separate bureaus—operations and intelligence. This would ease the problem of the FBI agent skilled at catching kidnapers (operations) but usually untrained to make political distinctions between a revolutionary terrorist and a busy

press disaster (intelligence). This would mean two directors, further reducing the power of Hoover's successor.

The second two proposals might make it harder to have Justice White or any other lifetime federal judge to the FBI. But critics see them as essential for the future, even though Hoover has not deserved much of the abuse heaped on him by liberals. In truth, the FBI has been just as tough on the Ku Klux Klan and the Minutemen as it has been on terrorists from the left. It has shown vastly more self-restraint and regard for civil liberties in dealing with the Black Panthers—under intense provocation—than local police departments.

What serious students of the FBI now want is assurance that it will be equipped to cope with the post-Hoover era and, beyond that, maybe even win the confidence of the nation's directors.