

Mr. Hoover's Blast *News*

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by Ludwell Denny

J. EDGAR HOOVER charges over a national hook-up that the widespread criticism of his F. B. I. emanates directly or indirectly from anti-American bodies trying to disrupt the entire United States.

Surely Mr. Hoover does not intend to put the venerable Sen. Norris, dean of American liberals and leader of the current F. B. I. criticism, Sen. Wheeler and many other eminent elected representatives of the American people, in the class of subversive enemies of the Republic.



Mr. Denny

Among those who have dared criticize wire-tapping—an F. B. I. practice until the recent Norris-Wheeler objections—are the justices of the U. S. Supreme Court. Were Congress and the Supreme Court subversive in outlawing Mr. Hoover's method? Mr. Hoover went on violating the law. Long after the law was passed he insisted that his wire-tapping was legal.

Are Mr. Hoover and his F. B. I. above the law? That is the issue raised by the Norris-Wheeler critics in the case of wire-tapping, in the Detroit Spanish Loyalist case violations of civil rights, and similar cases.

It is a serious issue. It far transcends the personality of Mr. Hoover.

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TO THE fathers who wrote the constitutional Bill of Rights, to the Congress which wrote the civil liberty statutes, and to the Supreme Court which has so vigorously upheld them, these rights are the basis of democracy and the chief barrier against dictatorship.

It is the right of Mr. Hoover as a citizen to disagree with those basic laws. It is not his right to violate them. And certainly it is not his right as a law-enforcement officer by his example to undermine the law he is paid and sworn to uphold.

Doubtless Mr. Hoover is sincere in insisting that he believes in the civil liberty laws and that he never violates them. But in our governmental system of checks and balances, it is proper and essential that his administrative

superiors, and Congress, and the courts see that the F. B. I. in this crisis does not operate as a law violator as it did during and after the last war.

The legal limits of Mr. Hoover's duty are clear. It is his job by legal methods to detect and bring to trial those who break laws under his jurisdiction. But it is not his job to investigate, intimidate, or persecute holders of unpopular opinions who obey the law.

Perhaps it is a fatal weakness of our Government that it guarantees civil liberties, which Nazis, Fascists and Communists take advantage of. Hitler and Stalin think so. And so do many members of the D. A. R., which applauded Mr. Hoover's speech yesterday.

But whether our old-fashioned Bill of Rights tends to preserve or destroy the nation in this time of Nazi and Communist Trojan-horse treachery is not for Mr. Hoover or the D. A. R. to dictate. They will have to leave it to Congress and the Supreme Court to make and interpret the laws under the Constitution.

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MR. HOOVER, being human, naturally resents personal attacks that have been made upon him—many of them unfair and some of them filthy. It is true that foreign agents and their dupes on one side, and ordinary criminals on the other side, hate him for his efficiency and try to smear him. That is the fate of many important public servants. They are honored by such enemies they make.

But Mr. Hoover is quite able to distinguish between the law-breakers who are trying to get him and the law-makers who will certainly get him if his F. B. I. reverts to the terroristic organization it used to be.

Mr. Hoover cannot escape democratic criticism by calling it subversive. If he attempts to confuse critics with crooks and traitors, he will not commend to the public his intelligence or fitness for his job.

The citizen's right to criticize secret police is still legal in the United States, the civil liberty is dead in most of the world.