

Literature and Less

CRITICS OF THE FBI GET COMEUPPANCE

THE FBI IN OUR OPEN SOCIETY.
By Harry and Bonaro Overstreet.
Norton. \$6.95.

By JOE MASSA

This all too-brief literary exercise focuses on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which the authors describe as an "indispensable but always potentially dangerous bureau."

Essentially, this book is long overdue in that it rebuffs certain segments of American society which prefer to see only a dark side of the FBI.

The writers contend that if the feelings of any vocal sector

of the public run high with regard to the passage of any law, they tend to run even higher with regard to its enforcement. Thus, the passionate partisanship of the present are mirrored in what people say about the FBI.

The task of evaluating the FBI, according to the Overstreets, has turned out to be one of separating sense from nonsense, fact from fiction and straight reporting from loaded polemics.

On the FBI's alleged neglect of civil rights cases, the Overstreets criticize those liberals who so consistently ignore the bureau's performance of its only assigned job and belabor it for not having done what it could not do.

The demand of the FBI detractors boils down to this: the FBI's work should be taken away from it because it does not, in behalf of a good cause, trespass beyond the limits of its assignment to perform a police function.

This book also examines the

"guerrilla war" against the FBI waged by the Communists, who are described as "untiring" in their efforts in these troubled times to inject a rigid, repetitious brand of anti-FBI propaganda.

The Overstreets maintain that what is hammered home insistently enough for a long enough time has a way of becoming "true." To this end, Communist propaganda has unceasingly depicted the FBI as the arch-enemy of American principles and freedoms. It has also cast FBI director J. Edgar Hoover as an advocate and practitioner of everything that is repressive and reactionary.

In this propaganda campaign, say the authors, the Communists are attempting to foster in the American people—and particularly in groups committed to a defense of civil and constitutional rights—enough distrust of the bureau to move the people to do for the Communists what the Communists have not been able to do for

themselves—that is, to curtail the bureau's power.

The authors also explore the FBI's fight against organized crime. A strong counter-offensive against organized crime is called for here, so that more Cosa Nostra members can be convicted and more illicit enterprises broken up.

All in all, this 387-page javant into the world of the FBI is an interesting venture that should be read by citizens seeking a little more enlightenment.