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Clark Scores FBI Over 'Ideology,' Lack of Diversity

NEW YORK, Nov. 17—Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, whom J. Edgar Hoover described as a "jellyfish" and a "softie," responded today with some criticism of his own about the FBI director.

Under Hoover, Clark said, the FBI has become "ideological" and has lacked internal diversity. Moreover, he told newsmen, Hoover erred in calling the Black Panthers the most dangerous group in America.

"That is patently absurd," Clark asserted. "I said it at the time and I'm still convinced of it. The FBI outnumber the Black Panthers seven to one, and if they can't handle it, they should have stayed in bed."

Clark's remarks came during and after a press conference called here to announce the creation of a Committee for Public Justice to counter what it deems repressive tendencies in America.

Clark was asked to comment on Hoover's description of him as a "jellyfish" in an interview published in Tuesday's Washington Post. "He's entitled to his opinion," Clark replied. "He never said it while I was there."

In the interview, Hoover said that Clark, who was President Johnson's chief law enforcement official, was the worst attorney general that the FBI chief had worked under in 45 years. Hoover's criticism was prompted by a book just published by Clark, "Crime in America," which asserts that the FBI director's "self-centered concern for his own reputation" has hampered the bureau's crime-fighting.

Clark broadened his attack today, saying that while Hoover had made "some valuable contributions" by showing that a big agency can be effective, these were offset by "two grave shortcomings."

"If an investigator has to be anything, he has to be a disenfranchised observer, a hard, hard pursuer of facts," Clark continued. "He cannot be ideological. For reasons that are unfortunate, in my judgment, the FBI became ideological some time back. This has put scales over its eyes."

The other failure, he maintained, was the lack of diversity within the Bureau. Clark said there was an "intolerance of different viewpoints," and that the last man who dared question Hoover "has been gone for some time."

Clark said that the pursuit of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. "is an illustration of the terribly wasteful use of resources" growing out of the FBI director's belief in "the ideology of a different time."

Clark wondered "why it's so difficult for him (Hoover) to begin civil rights investigations" and said there was a question how good the FBI was in investigating "unlawful police conduct."

Clark is a member of the executive council of the new committee, which plans to investigate and publicize what it regards as political repression. Other council members include former assistant U.S. Attorney Generals Roger Wilkins and Bourke Marshall, and onetime Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor Telford Taylor.

Playwright Lillian Hellman, the principal organizer of the group, also spoke at today's news conference. She said she felt impelled to do something last spring because "some of us thought we heard the voice of Joe McCarthy coming from the grave."