

Hoover Blots Criticism

If a man is to be judged by what he leaves behind him, few men have deserved better tributes from their fellow citizens than those being paid to the memory of J. Edgar Hoover.

What he leaves behind is something he virtually created by himself and maintained over nearly half a century as one of the finest and most respected organizations of its kind in the world, the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Any criticisms that have been or may be made against Hoover pale before this fact.

A short while before his death, Hoover wrote a letter to a reporter who had requested an interview. In it he stated that he did not feel it necessary to reply to his critics. Every year, he said, he went before Congress to report on the past year's activities of the FBI and to present his budget for the coming year. He was content to let the record speak for itself.

That record was never having any budget request denied or whittled down, never having to explain a scandal or failure of performance by the FBI.

John Edgar Hoover's personal career statistics are equally impressive. As a young law school graduate of 22, he joined the Justice Department in 1917. In 1924, he took over the FBI's predecessor bureau, one which was indeed subject to charges of ineptness and inefficiency. He set high standards for the FBI from the beginning and never tolerated any departure from them.

Hoover achieved fame as the nation's "top cop" — although the FBI is not and never was a police organization — in the 1920s and 1930s fighting the likes of John Dillinger and Baby Face Nelson and other vicious characters spawned by Prohibition and the Depression.

Millions of kids idolized this man of the stern, bulldog visage and dreamed of being G-men.

Perhaps the FBI's greatest triumph was the rounding up of submarine-landed saboteurs and the complete smashing of Nazi espionage in this country during World War II.

Hoover's total government service spanned 55 years, that as director of the FBI 48 years under 16 attorneys general and eight presidents, the last two of whom, saw fit to waive mandatory retirement age in his case. No successor will ever equal this.

In recent years, as he grew old and perhaps too convinced of his own indispensability, Hoover's image became somewhat tarnished. It was said that the FBI ignored organized crime, that Hoover saw too many Communists under too many beds, that

he had too keen an interest in the private affairs of prominent people.

It was whispered that he had a dossier on every official in Washington, which was why no one dared oppose him, either in the White House or on Capitol Hill.

But one thing no one has ever been able to charge against the FBI is that it ever played fast and loose with the constitutional rights of Americans. Long before certain Supreme Court decisions, which some claim have "handcuffed" law enforcement, the FBI observed the rights of a suspect against self-incrimination and to be represented by an attorney.

The FBI deals in evidence, meticulously gathered, not the confession tactics of a Gestapo or N.K.V.D.

It is no disrespect to Hoover to say that he left public service in the only way he would have agreed to, had he the choice — still in harness and in full command of the FBI, departing life suddenly to the grief of his admirers and the consternation of those who would have taken pleasure in seeing him put out to pasture.

One of J. Edgar Hoover's last statements was this: "I have a philosophy. You are honored by your friends and you are distinguished by your enemies. I have been very distinguished."

Now he is nothing but honored.

EMPHASIS ON THE 'KIL'

"We just set a new world's speed record, Houston," the Apollo 16 astronauts radioed to earth after a ride in their extraterrestrial dune buggy, "— 17 kilometers an hour on the moon."

If you pronounced that word ki-LOM-eter, you're in good company but in bad form. It should be KIL-o-meter, with the accent on the first syl-LAB-le. But for some reason, most Americans, including scientists, use the first pronunciation, apparently because of a false analogy with the word barometer.

Europeans, who have been using the metric system a good many years, accent the first syllable. We ought to do the same, chemist Harold C. Urey admonishes his fellow scientists in a letter to Science magazine. He points out that we don't stress the second syllable in millimeter or centimeter or kilowatt, etc.

Since the metric system will, one of these days, be adopted in this country and radar will be clocking us on the highway in kilometers an hour instead of miles an hour, maybe all of us ought to begin practicing the internationally accepted pronunciation.

F. Post

Final Hoover Message

(For many years, newspapers have found so much meaning in the monthly "Message From The Director. . . To All Law Enforcement Officers" — from J. Edgar Hoover in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, a publication which went to most law agencies and the press — that they have on numerous occasions published the texts in full. This newspaper has published the timely messages. The one that follows, from the May Bulletin, on Law Day, was his last. We commend it to your reading).

Extremists of all stripes in our society ceaselessly attempt to discredit the rule of law as being biased and oppressive. They have no conception of — or purposely choose to ignore — its role and history. It is not surprising that these divisive elements concentrate their abuse on the law enforcement officer. Above all, he stands firmly in the path of mindless actions that would reduce our government of laws to mob rule or the whims of lawless men.

To permit such attempts to damage the reputation of our government by law is, of course, a necessary condition of democracy. While it must tolerate the lawfully expressed views of extremists, its citizens cannot through their own ignorance be entrapped with sympathy for bankrupt doctrines that would lay waste the foundations of their Nation.

In observing Law Day, USA, this May 1st, we have an opportunity to view our laws in their proper perspective and appreciate the role they have played in developing our Nation. This day is also a time to renew our obligation of support to law enforcement officers, 126 of whom selflessly gave their lives last year in upholding the law.

Our greatest democratic heritage is the rule of law. It is the foundation for and the guardian of the rights, liberties, and orderly progress we enjoy. It is also the soil that has nurtured the "American dream" implicit in the Declaration of Independence pledge to provide ". . . Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" for all our citizens.

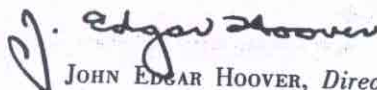
The tests of time and challenge in our Nation's history have more than proven the majesty of the law. Were this not so, our country would not have endured its strife to now stand before

the nations of the world as a model of freedom and accomplishment. This is not to say the law has always been right, but that it has been organized to ultimately seek justice. Recognition of its power for good is not merely the experience of our nearly two centuries of democratic government. The struggle to insure the rights of the individual and his social organizations by written decree has roots which reach far back into antiquity. The authors of our Constitution were mindful of this legacy when they drafted that historic document.

Nor was the importance of a definitive rule of law lost to the general public of our infant Nation. Worn by the ravages of the Revolutionary War, our expectant forefathers appealed for and got amendments to the Constitution which formed the Bill of Rights — specific guarantees of law that responded to the heart of their grievances. Together the Constitution and the Bill of Rights gave birth to our rule of law and it is the flesh and blood of our Nation.

The law is dynamic because it responds to change as it did for those who argued for and received the Bill of Rights. And our Nation's history has been a chronicle of change. But the process of change in a democracy requires discipline and responsibility that will not unleash unrestrained forces that would rip the fabric of our freedoms. That fabric derives its strength through the warp and woof of laws that orderly guide the process of change by defining our individual and corporate duties. Change in our society would otherwise simply result from those who could impose their will on others without regard for the validity of their arguments or the rights of those who do not share their views.

Law Day honors an indispensable commitment of a free society: that democracy be dynamic but not self-destructive. If we do not value this commitment by both honoring and obeying the rule of law, the tyranny of extremists may inevitably result.


JOHN EDGAR HOOVER, Director