

# Hoover Attacks Observer Account as 'Scurrilous'

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(Times-Picayune National Service)

WASHINGTON — FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, under attack from all sides, exploded at the prestigious weekly newspapers of Dow Jones & Company Inc., calling an account of his career "scurrilous," and filled with malicious distortions.

The company and the editor of the weekly National Observer replied it had interviewed 108 individuals, many of them former high officials, and said its story was the product of careful reporting.

THE CONFLICT was disclosed when the Observer reprinted the April 12 article — "Hoover: Life and Times of a 76-Year-Old Cop" — and an exchange of letters between the paper's management and the director. Dow Jones also publishes The Wall Street Journal.

The Hoover criticism was aimed at a story that termed him "feared, revered, and human," and said he is "neither the infallible symbol of law and order portrayed by his press releases nor the ogre painted by his critics."

The article appeared with an editorial that said Hoover's critics had an upper hand and "he is finished." It warned that "in easing out the FBI's aging creator and director and in thus reminding the bureau that he is human, we must make sure that the FBI itself does not disappear."

Hoover's first letter on April 14 did not mention the editorial or the laudatory portions of

the story. He said it was "replete with comments that are not only distorted, but are designed to undermine public confidence . . ." in the FBI.

The director said it was "an absolute and unqualified lie," for example, that the FBI used electronic eavesdropping against every Las Vegas casino a few years ago, except for one owned by Hoover friend Del Webb.

But according to Observer editor Henry Gemmill, admis-

In sum, Hoover said the story was "a blatant attempt to set forth a string of innuendoes, inaccuracies, and plain outright distortions in such a manner that they give the appearance of representing true facts and honest reporting, which they do not."

Gemmill's reply to Hoover acknowledged "absolute truth is elusive. Maybe Francis Biddle was a liar. Maybe other distinguished Americans conspired to tell us lies." He noted that 108 interviews, including talks with three former attorneys general, cabinet officers, federal judges and former FBI officials went into the piece.

Gemmill said, "honest newspapers — relying upon the best available evidence, checked and rechecked — can upon occasion print errors, just as honest police forces can arrest innocent men and honest courts can convict them."

BUT THE EDITOR maintained "it was not our aim to undermine public confidence in the men and women of the FBI." He said the aim was "a well-balanced article" and, in the opinion of his company, the goal was "accomplished very well."

According to the newspaper, the Gemmill letter went to Hoover May 27 and included an offer for the director to discuss the matter further. The paper said there had been no response from the FBI.



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sions of FBI eavesdropping in Las Vegas were made in court and the newspaper was informed "by several men of high repute who were in a position to know," that Webb's casino was exempt from the tactics.

Hoover also took issue with the memoirs of the late Francis Biddle, one of the 16 U.S. attorneys general Hoover has served in the 47 years he has headed the FBI.