

Post 10/16/71

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FBI and Pistol Permits

This is in response to the editorial appearing in the Oct. 7 edition of The Washington Post captioned "Pistol Permits," which is just one more example of inaccurate reporting and apparent straining for inferences upon which can be based a criticism of the FBI. I am specifically referring to allegations of the FBI's noncooperativeness with the Metropolitan Police in checking applicants for pistol permits and to the comment, "In what seems suspiciously like a fit of the sulks, the FBI has interpreted this as forbidding it to search its voluminous fingerprint files and tell the local police if a pistol-permit applicant has a police record."

First, your readers should be given the benefit of the judge's comments set forth in his memorandum opinion dated June 15, 1971, which states—"it is abundantly clear that Congress never intended to or in fact did authorize dissemination of arrest records to any state or local agency for purposes of employment and licensing checks." Secondly, appropriate inquiry would have disclosed that because of the quasi-federal nature of District of Columbia agencies, the FBI sought legal interpretation by the Department of Justice with regard to dissemination of identification records in response to local employment and licensing in the District of Columbia. The opinion of the department was that Judge Gesell's order prohibited such dissemination in the District of Columbia. Thus, it can readily be seen that the FBI did not unilaterally interpret the court's decision in the *Menard v. Mitchell* case and that we are acting responsibly to comply with that decision—not from "a fit of the sulks." Readers of your newspaper would not be so frequently misled if similar responsibility were exercised by your staff.

J. EDGAR HOOVER,

Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation.
Washington.

See today's editorial, "Arrest Records and the FBI."