

(Fuller version filed Hoover.)

FBI Critics Derided

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Agnew Defends Hoover**New Orleans**

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew strongly defended J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI yesterday.

Agnew accused Democratic presidential aspirants and others who have criticized Hoover's operation of the FBI of trying to make him and the bureau a political issue.

The vice president discounted and contention that Hoover, at 76, is too old to continue as FBI director.

ISSUE

"No, I think it is something more than age that is the real issue in the effort to drive J. Edgar Hoover out of office," Agnew said.

"A more likely explanation is the fact that he is anathema to the New Left and extremists of every stripe, and he doesn't mince words

in calling attention to them as dangerous to the country."

He added, "Personally, I have complete confidence in this dedicated, steel-willed public servant with the 20-20 vision into our national security and crime-control problems and the institution that he has made the beacon of law enforcement in America. I am sure they will again triumph over their critics, and the American people will be the winners."

DEFENSE

Agnew's speech was the most detailed defense of Hoover by the Nixon administration since the recent criticism began.

The speech, delivered to several hundred cheering delegates at the Southern Gas Association convention, denounced as "opportunists"

the Democratic presidential aspirants — Senator George D. McGovern (Dem-S.D.) and Senator Edmund Muskie (Dem-Me.) — who had criticized Hoover.

Speaking of their attack, Agnew said, "It gives off an unpleasant political odor — perhaps for the first time in FBI history — and it comes mainly from presidential aspirants who apparently foresee some political accretion from the radical left if they challenge the integrity of the FBI and its longtime director."

Agnew singled out McGovern and Muskie for derision because of their criticism of Hoover.

Referring to McGovern's assertion that political figures, student activists, leaders for peace and social justice are under surveillance by FBI agents, Agnew said

the agency has neither the time nor the manpower for the surveillance it is accused of maintaining.

He challenged Muskie's charge that the bureau had him under surveillance at last year's anti-pollution rallies on Earth Day in Washington.

Agnew said that agents were there to watch "an incendiary radical, one Rennie Davis," who was a defendant in the conspiracy trial of the Chicago Seven.

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