

Merry-Go-Round *SF Chronicle* NOV. 9 1966

FBI's J. Edgar Hoover Issue in the Election



Drew Pearson

THE MAN RUNNING for governor of Nevada today, in effect, is J. Edgar Hoover. He has become the No. 1 issue in the race between Governor Grant Sawyer, Democrat, who has criminally prosecuted the FBI for illegally using electronic listening devices, and Paul Laxalt, Republican, who is running against him.

Laxalt defends Hoover as untouchable, contends that he can do no wrong, and has demanded that Governor Sawyer publicly apologize for his criticism of Hoover.

Instead of apologizing, Sawyer has intensified his criticism and written Hoover a letter asking for detailed proof that the FBI chief had caught any members of the underworld "skimming"—illegally picketing part of the Las Vegas gambling take—for the purpose of financing underworld crime.

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SAWYER'S CRITICISM of Hoover puts him in a unique position. So far, no other public official except solicitor general Thurgood Marshall has had the guts to take on the 72-year-old FBI chief who keeps the secret files of all government officials and has the power to investigate them.

The solicitor general stood up in the Supreme Court on June 13 to report the fact that Hoover had been using listening devices indiscriminately and without authority from the attorney general for an undisclosed number of years. As a result scores of excellent government prosecutions will have to be dropped.

Among these, the income tax conviction of Fred Black was reversed because the FBI had placed a bug in his Carlton hotel suite in Washington; and the indict-

ments of Bobby Baker are certain to be quashed because, again, the FBI used listening devices to collect evidence.

None of the Senators who had castigated Bobby Baker rose to criticize the police state snooping methods of J. Edgar Hoover which nullified the case against him. And Senator Ed Long of Missouri, chairman of a Senate committee on snooping, was strangely silent.

Only the Governor of Nevada had the courage to cite Hoover personally for his police state methods.

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IN THIS CONNECTION, both Sawyer and his opponent, Lieutenant Governor Laxalt, might well read this month's issue of Ramparts magazine and its article on wire tapping by William W. Turner, a former FBI man. It's an amazing revelation.

Turner tells how Hoover operates a "sound school" to teach agents how to place bugs, also to pick locks and make illegal entry for the purpose of placing bugs. He even reproduces a letter of commendation for "sneaking inside a man's home to plant a bug."

"Your work in an operation of considerable value to the Bureau was of the highest caliber and I do not want the occasion to pass without thanking you," Hoover wrote FBI agent Turner, March 7, 1960. "The competent, resourceful and effective fashion in which you handled your responsibilities was indeed commendable and contributed materially to the successful handling of this delicate assignment."

The delicate assignment, according to the ex-FBI agent, was a high-class job of burglary.

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(Laxalt won the election.)