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PRESIDENT SEEKS TO RETAIN HOOVER

Might Waive Retirement of F.B.I. Chief Set for Jan. 1

By ANTHONY LEWIS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 3—President Johnson is considering a plan to waive the compulsory retirement age for J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Mr. Hoover will be 70 years old next Jan. 1, and he would ordinarily have to step down on that birthday. But the chances are that he will remain in the job that has become so identified with him.

He took over as director of the F.B.I. on May 10, 1924. This will be 40 years ago next Sunday. President Johnson may well use the occasion of this anniversary to issue an order allowing Mr. Hoover to remain as director after he passes 70.

Few doubt that Mr. Hoover will stay on if he can. Some years ago there was talk of his retirement, but he has given no recent indication of wanting to give up the prestige and power he has accumulated.

Mr. Hoover is a phenomenon without any known equivalent in Washington—an official who rarely if ever receives anything but praise from politicians of either party.

As F.B.I. director he has built up over the years substantial independence from his own superior, the Attorney General and from any real Congressional control of F.B.I. appropriations or policies.

This independence has been both praised and criticized.

It is valued especially as an assurance that the F.B.I. will not be involved in partisan politics. Mr. Hoover has never registered in either party and has made a point of emphasizing the bureau's nonpartisanship.

Critics think it is wrong in principle to have a chief investigator so largely free of control by Justice Department officials. They say Mr. Hoover has gained excessive personal power by centralizing F.B.I. direction and publicity.

If the President does waive retirement for Mr. Hoover at 70, the reaction will doubtless



Associated Press

MAY EXTEND TENURE:
J. Edgar Hoover, head of Federal Bureau of Investigation. The President may waive retirement rule when he becomes 70 next Jan. 1.

be along these divergent lines. Most of the official comment will unquestionably be laudatory to the F.B.I. director.

A resolution has already been introduced in Congress to note and praise his 40th anniversary in the job. Mr. Hoover has won genuine admiration and friendship from many on Capitol Hill not only for his efficiency at the F.B.I. but also for numerous personal confidences and items of assistance.

He has had direct access to Presidents for many years. Presidents at least back through Franklin D. Roosevelt have found him invaluable in his information on people and events of the Washington scene.

Mr. Hoover is perhaps closer to President Johnson than to most occupants of the White House. They got along well for years before Mr. Johnson took over the Presidency last fall.

It was President Roosevelt, at the start of World War II, who originally assigned to Mr. Hoover and the F.B.I. the job of countering espionage and sabotage.

Since then, this has become a major element in the bureau's activities, with emphasis on fighting Communism. Mr. Hoover is a dedicated anti-Communist and has written and

spoken at length on the threat of Communism.

The one area in which the bureau and its director have most often been criticized in recent years is civil rights.

Some civil rights organizations have charged the F.B.I. with insufficient concern about law violations by white racists in the South. They say bureau agents have developed too close relations with Southern police officials who may themselves violate Negro rights.

But these criticisms have drawn no support from Justice Department officials.

SF division
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Johnson Won't Let Hoover Quit

Washington

President Johnson isn't going to let J. Edgar Hoover retire when he reaches 70 next January 1, the usual mandatory retirement age for Government personnel.

White House sources said yesterday that Mr. Johnson intends to waive the 70-year retirement rule to allow the veteran FBI director to remain on the job. This can be done by the President through an executive order.

The custom is to extend the retirement for one year, but there is no limit on how often the President can do this.

Hoover will have held the FBI post 40 years next Sunday. He was appointed on May 10, 1924 during the administration of President Calvin Coolidge. He has served under 13 attorneys general.

Hoover is reported to be in good health and ready to keep his job if Johnson asks him to stay.

Associated Press