

# F. B. I. Back to Normal, Catching Suspect

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 18 — "It's business as usual, no problems at all. We're just going about normal tasks."

That is the way Thomas E. Bishop, an assistant director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, described the mood of the bureau at the end of one of the stormiest weeks in its history.

Indeed, it appeared like business as usual. In the middle of the week the bureau captured one of its "10 most wanted" criminals, a suspected murderer, in Pacifica, Calif. And, after an outpouring of wrath six weeks ago at Senator George S. McGovern, when the South Dakota Democrat sharply criticized the bureau, traditional silence reigned in the hall of the Justice Department building occupied by the F.B.I.

Using the low-profile bureaucratic style he has employed for most, if not all of the 46 years he has run the place, John Edgar Hoover sat in the fifth-floor office granting no interviews, making no statements and taking none of the proffered opportunities to defend himself against criticism that by week's end had a most unusual stridency.

Mr. Bishop, who heads the bureau's crime records division, is also its chief public relations man. When he was not in a series of frantic meetings last week with Justice Department and F.B.I. officials, he passed out a succession of no comments to a growing band of pesky newsmen, telling at least one of them that the newsmen was not "supposed" to seek to talk with bureau officials other than himself.

## Depending on Goodwill

It was clear that the bureau had returned to its traditional policy of silence, depending on its friends in Congress and the executive branch and, more importantly, on the reservoir of trust and goodwill among the American people that Mr. Hoover believes he has built.

The question for those charting the mood of the bureau is why it reverted to silence after venting no little wrath on Mr. McGovern.

The reversion comes at a time when even some of his supporters are saying Mr. Hoover may be in his most serious trouble. There is a feeling that the critics may be draining, gallon by gallon, reservoir of goodwill built over the years with the arrests in the 30's of gangsters, in the 40's of Nazi spies, in the 50's of Communists and in the 60's of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassin, James Earl Ray.

Part of Mr. Hoover's problem



bureau remains silent, its critics do not. They came in last week with still more troublesome allegations that the F.B.I.'s 7,910 special agents (108 from non-white minority groups) were doing things they should not.

Representative Hale Boggs of Louisiana, the House majority leader, charged on April 6 that the bureau was tapping Congressmen's telephones.

Next, Senator Edmund S. Muskie, the Democratic Presidential aspirant from Maine, released an F.B.I. report showing that the bureau had engaged in surveillance of Earth Day, an antipollution rally held here a year ago. And then it was discovered that the bureau had — with court approval — sent an informer into the office of Representative John Dowdy, Democrat of Texas, with a hidden tape recorder and had recorded telephone conversations between the informer and Mr. Dowdy.

## Anderson and McGovern

These disclosures piled atop criticism of the bureau by Representative William R. Anderson, Democrat of Tennessee, last November and Senator McGovern in January.

Mr. Anderson chastised Mr. Hoover for telling a Senate subcommittee that the Rev. Philip and Daniel J. Berrigan were the leaders of a group plotting to kidnap a Presidential aide and damage Government buildings in Washington.

Senator McGovern called for an investigation of Mr. Hoover's "persecution" of John Shaw, an F.B.I. agent dismissed for writing a letter on the strength and shortcomings of the bureau.

After his speech, Senator McGovern received and entered in the Congressional Record an unsigned letter purportedly written by 10 F.B.I. agents that decried what they said was a Hoover cult of personality in the bureau.

That did it for the bureau. Senator McGovern received a stream of 21 letters that made it clear that events had not altered the loyalty of the F.B.I. leadership to Mr. Hoover. The letters also made it clear that the bureau's top executives re-

as the smears of a headline-hunting politician.

Clyde A. Tolson, the associate F.B.I. director, wrote: "You are not the first person I have encountered during almost 50 years in Washington whose ambition has far exceeded his ability."

## 'Champion of Privacy'

Ivan W. Conrad, an assistant director wrote: "The vast majority of Americans know from long years of experience that there is neither now nor has ever been a greater champion of their personal privacy and personal freedom than Mr. Hoover."

Some of the letter-writers showed sensitivity to the issue of their director's age. James H. Gale, another assistant director wrote: "Far from being senile, his mind is as razor sharp as it was when I first talked to him 20 years ago."

William S. Tavel, an assistant director, wrote that the anonymous agents had "failed to specify even one case where the bureau's responsibilities have been neglected. They cannot do so truthfully because none have been," he added.

Senator McGovern entered all of these letters in the record noting that they had all been written by members of the bureau's hierarchy. Then there descended on him 200 more letters, this time from F.B.I. agents, secretaries, inspectors and clerks.

The Senator said that many of the letters followed the same pattern and used similar stationery. He suggested that they had all been inspired.

Thus, the bureau brought in cannon for use against Senator McGovern and his anonymous evidence. But it tried no such thing with Senator Muskie or

Representative Boggs or Senator Edward M. Kennedy. The Massachusetts Democrat quietly said in answer to a question one night that he too thought Mr. Hoover should retire.

In the meanwhile, President Nixon stayed out of the fray for 10 days after Mr. Boggs made his charges, and when he did speak out directly he refused to say how long he intended to keep Mr. Hoover in his post.

The widely accepted view here is that the White House now finds Mr. Hoover an embarrassment and would in fact love to edge him out of his job if it could do so gracefully. The problem, in this view, is that the harder the Democrats attack the director, the harder it is for Mr. Nixon to seem to capitulate by retiring him.

Last Friday, President Nixon told newsmen that he would not discuss Mr. Hoover's tenure, but he said he believed "it would be most unfortunate" to allow him "to go out under a cloud, maligned unfairly by many critics."

The President also suggested that the critics might be hurting their own cause. Knowing Mr. Hoover, he said, he believed the effect of the criticism would be "not to hasten his retirement but to have him dig in."

## A Shift by Mansfield

Two events have shifted the opinion of some officials here who initially discounted the unsubstantiated charges by Mr. Boggs. These were the disclosure of the surveillance of Representative Dowdy.

Thus, Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the majority leader, first criticized Mr. Hoover's detractors, then conceded he was having second thoughts and