

Merry-Go-Round



By Drew Pearson

The Hoover-King Talks

MORE DETAILS have leaked out regarding the dramatic talk between J. Edgar Hoover and the man he called "the most notorious liar in the country."

The meeting was amicable, and lasted so long — with Hoover doing most of the talking—that Dr. Martin Luther King almost missed his plane to Atlanta.

Most surprising statement made by the FBI chief was this advice: "What you need to do is educate the Negro and get him to vote."

Dr. King and his associates were so flabbergasted that they didn't come back at Hoover to remind him that the drive to register and vote was the reason why Negroes had been beaten and brutalized in some sections of the South.

Hoover made no apology to Dr. King for calling him a liar, though Dr. King gave him an opening. He told Hoover that at no time had he made the statement attributed to him criticizing FBI agents for being derelict in their duties because of their Southern background.

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HOOPER was quite eloquent and convincing regarding his description of the FBI's problems in the South, and gave the Negro leaders the impression that he was sincere and determined regarding future policy.

The FBI's No. 1 problem in the Deep South is the difficulty of getting juries to convict. He cited the murder of Lieutenant Colonel Lemuel Penn, the reserve officer killed in Georgia. The evidence Hoover said, was overwhelming, yet a jury had failed to convict.

The No. 2 problem, Hoover said, is that of Southern law enforcement officers who sometimes have been responsible for beatings and murders.

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HOOPER kept reminding Dr. King that the FBI is only an investigative agency, that it has no police power beyond that.

Dr. King, in turn, emphasized to the FBI chief that the Negro's one ray of hope is the Government. In state courts, the Negro can't expect to get justice.

"The Federal Government is the one thing that keeps the fires of hope burning," Dr. King said. "But today, we sometimes wonder whether the FBI was with us."

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While Hoover made it clear he understood what a wilderness the Deep South is when it comes to law enforcement, he also made it clear he has no great understanding of the civil rights struggle.

In brief, Hoover appeared to his callers as a great cop, but not a humanitarian.