

FBI's J. Edgar Hoover Just Keeps Rolling Along



J. EDGAR HOOVER

By Tom Wicker
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The President-elect has reappointed J. Edgar Hoover as director of the FBI. Hoover, at 73, like ol' man river, just keeps rolling along. Who else has been deemed worthy of holding the same public office since the Coolidge administration? And what is it that gives one

man seigniorial rights over such an important agency?

Plenty of complaints, after all, can be heard around the Justice Department, and even in the F.B.I. itself, that the agency is become a little too set in its ways to be quite up-to-date; and The Director's role in recent wiretap and bugging controversies has raised numerous questions of propriety.

His reappointments ad infinitum sometimes have been defended on grounds that his office ought not to be a political plum. This is true enough; but it does not follow either that no change can ever be made in it, or that if Nixon or some other President decided to make such a change, he would appoint a partisan political figure. Being above politics is not

the same thing as being above the civil service laws.

Besides, J. Edgar Hoover himself has mitigated, if he has not destroyed, the non-political argument. Against the political policy of the Johnson Administration, for instance, he openly lobbied against Senate confirmation of the consular treaty with the Soviet Union.

Last summer, Hoover pub-

licly campaigned against Senator McCarthy for president by distorting McCarthy's words. The director wrote in his agency's law enforcement bulletin:

"All Americans should view with serious concern the announced intentions and threats by a political candidate, if elected, to take over and revamp the F.B.I. to suit his own personal whims and

desires."

What McCarthy actually had said was that he would fire Hoover because "everybody knows that in a formal sense the F.B.I. is subject to

the Attorney General, but you allow someone to be built up like J. Edgar Hoover — it's as though he's not to be challenged."