

Page Two



Second-class postage paid at Midlothian, Texas 76065. Office of publication is 214 West Avenue F Midlothian, Texas 76065. Any erroneous reflection upon the character, standing or reputation of any person, firm or corporation, appearing in the columns of The Mirror will fully and gladly be corrected upon being brought to the attention of the editor of this paper.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

For One Year ..... \$5.00

Single Copies ..... 15c  
Editor ..... Penn Jones Jr.  
Publisher ..... The Midlothian Mirror, Inc.

**PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY**

Winner of the 1963 Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award for Courage in Journalism.



# EDITORIALS

## Dear Senator J. Edgar is not God

We invite our readers, each in his own way, to follow the example set forth below — itself a response to a suggestion coming from a reader (Repartee, page 6, N.C.R., Dec. 11). Our letter is addressed to Mr. Eagleton as a senator from Missouri.

Senator Thomas Eagleton  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Eagleton:

You are no doubt familiar with the sensational testimony given by J. Edgar Hoover on November

27 before a subcommittee of the United States Senate. This letter is written to ask your close attention to that testimony and its implications.

As you know, Mr. Hoover came to the subcommittee to ask more money for the FBI. In support of his request he cited as an instance of the bureau's work its discovery of a plot to kidnap a White House official and to blow up steam pipes and electrical conduits serving the capital. He attributed this plot to the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives, and named two men as its leaders: Fathers Daniel and Philip Berrigan, both of whom are now serving sentences for burning draft records.

So far as the transcript of the testimony shows, these very serious accusations went unchallenged. Mr. Hoover offered no evidence to support them and he was not asked to do so. Yet the charges were instantly made known to all the millions of Americans who pay the most cursory attention to the daily news.

Quite apart from the truth or falsity of the accusations, we submit that it is contrary to the spirit of our institutions that the nation's highest ranking police officer should have license to indict any citizen in this way.

Given the nature of the charges, given our knowledge of the accused, we further believe that Mr. Hoover's accusations are not merely false but fantastic.

Fathers Daniel and Philip Berrigan are convicted felons, but they have never been convicted of lying; their lives and their minds are open to the world. They have denied these charges as sheer fabrications.

The members of the East Coast Conspiracy have made clear that theirs was a tiny, ad hoc group which is no longer even in existence. They have testified that while they are totally opposed to the Vietnam war, they never contemplated the kind of violence against persons with which they are charged by the director of the FBI. And they too are persons with known records and commitments, who have never concealed their convictions or their past actions.

If these denials are given the credit they deserve, Mr. Hoover has demonstrated that he is either incompetent or a liar, in addition to being insensitive to the rights of citizens and the requirements of due process.

A man like that holding the office he holds constitutes a danger to national security. That is a matter of concern to members of the Congress.

The issues raised by Mr. Hoover's testimony go well beyond the injuries inflicted on the persons he accused, and beyond the question of the competence and integrity of a particular police official.



Whatever his intentions may be (apart from his goal of getting an added \$14 million for his bureau), Mr. Hoover's testimony has the effect of blurring the vital distinction between violent revolution and non-violent, prophetic protest.

Father Daniel Berrigan has repeatedly asked the pardon of the nation for his sin of napalming draft system paper instead of Vietnamese babies. There are those who dismiss this stance as simplistic rather than prophetic. They have a right to make that judgment. But when a man of learning and sensitivity, a distinguished poet, driven by conscience, risks reputation, career and freedom to speak his deepest moral convictions to our citizenry, no one has the right to close his ears — much less to classify him with bombers and trashers.

Mr. Hoover's testimony confirms once more the conviction of all those among our youth who believe that our "system" is run by men who have lost all ethical sensitivity, who cannot question the moral worth of U.S. policies whatever havoc those policies may cause, men who are cogs in a war machine.

More specifically, if Mr. Hoover's testimony is not effectively challenged within our government-

al structure, that fact will once more confirm the belief that he has become a power unto himself.

Protesting the words and actions of J. Edgar Hoover has come to seem quixotic, like protesting the tides. After 46 years of operating the FBI, he has become more myth than man. Political leaders appear to believe that he is so revered that to oppose him is fatal. And the quaking extends to the media. *Time's* recent interview with Mr. Hoover was illustrated by a beautifully composed Karsh photo that must be 10 years old. The editors' introduction spoke of his aberrations of judgment as "frank prejudices." Frank prejudices, of course, are good, homey, red-white-and-blue prejudices, exactly the kind the nation's top policeman should have.

Thus far, to our knowledge, one member of the national legislature has taken cognizance of the impropriety (and probable falsity) of Mr. Hoover's testimony to the Senate: Representative William Anderson of Tennessee. Mr. Anderson said the

Berrigan brothers should have the opportunity to testify before a federal grand jury on the Hoover charges against them. It is true this should happen; it seems most unlikely that it will happen, since any such development would presumably require affirmative action by the Department of Justice.

But Mr. Anderson said he also intends to discuss the possibility of a hearing for the Berrigans before an appropriate legislative committee.

We write now to voice our support for this proposal and to ask yours. It is not right that any American should be smeared with impunity by the officials of his government. It is wrong and dangerous for the country that the voice of conscience should be distorted in transmission. It is frightening that an appointive police official should have the opportunity to broadcast his narrow political views and his stunted ethical assumptions without fear of challenge from the people's representatives.

We hope to hear from you. Most of all, we hope to learn that the Congress will initiate proceedings which will give Mr. Hoover's victims the opportunity to confront him and his accusations.

THE EDITORS

*National Catholic Reporter*

Reprinted from the December 18, 1970  
NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER