

Hoover: Never Thought of Quitting

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — J. Edgar Hoover, who celebrates his 77th birthday New Year's Day, says he has never considered stepping down as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation despite nearly a half-century of service.

Hoover has served past the mandatory retirement age of 70 for federal employees at the express pleasure of Presidents Johnson and Nixon since May, 1964. Nixon has said Hoover will stay on as long as his health and performance remain good.

"I am indeed fortunate in being blessed with excellent health," Hoover said.

"As for retirement, I have never considered stepping down from my position in the FBI as long as I can be of service to my country and have the health, vigor and enthusiasm to perform my responsibilities in the manner my superiors and the public have a right to expect."

Tough Line

Hoover took a tough line in response to his critics. He will never relax his "stern self- and organizational - discipline, and we make no apologies for it."

There have been changes in six of the 13 top posts in the FBI hierarchy recently, and a seventh is imminent.

William Sullivan, assistant to the director who had been considered Hoover's heir apparent, was reported to have been forced to resign in a dispute over policy and methods. Hoover has been accused of ruining his agency with arbitrary discipline.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark once charged Hoover with so dominating the FBI with a "self-centered concern for his reputation" that the agency sometimes sacrificed effective crime control in a pursuit of personal glory. Hoover called Clark "a jellyfish."

Tight Controls

"Yes, we have tight controls and firm discipline in the FBI," he said. "Those that argue these organizational reins should be relaxed fail to understand the nature of FBI responsibilities and how little room they leave for error."

"Anyone who maintains that 'old-fashioned methods' prevail in the FBI simply is exposing his ignorance of the day-to-day operation of this bureau as well as its impact on the history of modern United States law enforcement," he said.

Hoover has long been criticized for his record on hiring of minorities. He has been sued by two women seeking court orders forcing him to relax his rule against female agents.

"Of approximately 8500 special agents," he said, "the FBI currently has



FBI DIRECTOR J. EDGAR HOOVER
"... as long as I can be of service"

135 from minority groups consisting of blacks, American Indians, Orientals and those with Spanish surnames."

No Relaxation

While nothing would please him more than to increase the minority representation, Hoover declared, "I will not relax the very important issue of minority em-

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high qualifications the FBI has traditionally demanded of its special agent applicants simply to play a number game with ployment."

"To do so," he said, "would only slur those who seek true equality, weaken FBI efficiency and morale, and destroy public confidence in our standards."

Hoover said the question of women had been given "the most careful consideration," but he said "it is our conclusion in the FBI that we must use only men in the position of special agent."

While Hoover is adamant about female agents, it was recently disclosed that his

own personal secretary — who has the title of executive assistant — is one of the three highest paid women in the Justice Department and ranks among the highest in federal employment.

Long Tenure

Helen Gandy, at age 74 just three years younger than her boss, has almost as much tenure. She began work at the department more than 53 years ago, on March 25, 1918.

Hoover joined the department July 26, 1917, and became director of the FBI's predecessor agency — the Bureau of Investigation — on May 10, 1924.

Also in Hoover's office is his lifelong friend and assistant, Associate Director Clyde Tolson, the No. 2 man at the FBI, who despite a serious illness is serving past his 70th birthday at Hoover's pleasure. He will be 72 in May.

Advance Advice

Hoover had this advice for whoever might take over the FBI some day:

"I firmly believe that if the FBI is to remain a responsible agency of government, it must be led by someone who will instill it with, as I have always tried to do, principles of personal integrity, character and dedication to duty."

Although he thinks progress is being made in the fight against street crime, Hoover said "the current crime problem developed over a long period of many years, and it may take an equally long time to bring lawlessness under control."

"Citizens must learn that being a passive ally to crime — that is, looking the other way when offenses are committed and patronizing criminal enterprises — will only continue to strengthen the lawless element."

"It (the public) must also be militant against those who contribute to criminality by treating the law with disdain."

Hoover agrees the criminal justice system must be overhauled but stressed that the constitutional guarantee of the 4th Amendment against unreasonable search and seizure "must also be understood to apply equally to protection from criminal attack."