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Editorials

The Pen Pals of J. Edgar Hoover

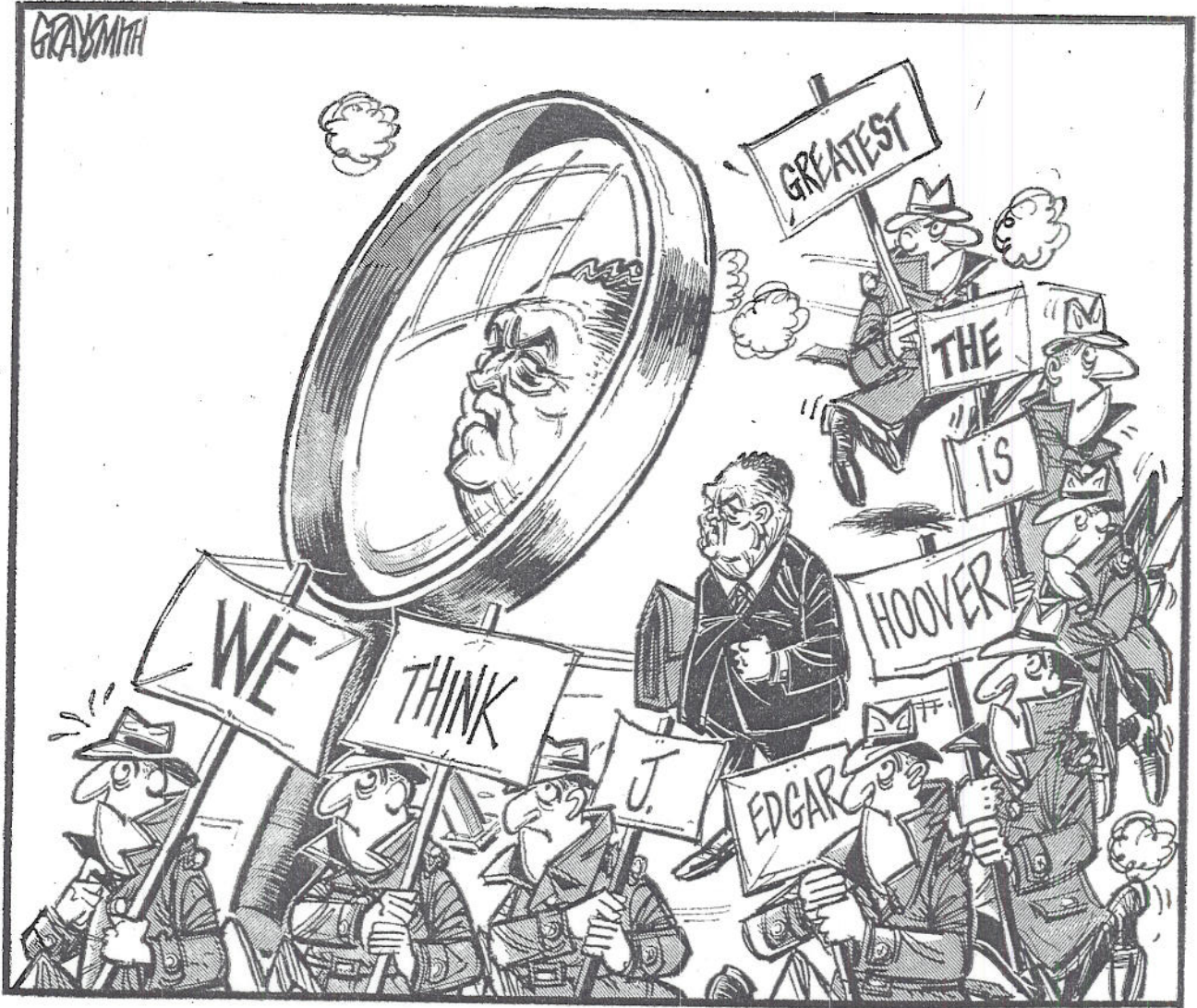
THROUGH SOME ODD COINCIDENCE, U.S. Senator George McGovern has received a little tidal wave of complaining letters from 12 top officials of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a scattering of agents of lesser magnitude, all chiding him for his criticism of J. Edgar Hoover.

That it was a coincidence was established by the correspondence, itself, some of which went to considerable pains to deny it was "mandatory."

The writers expressed bitter indignation over what they called "unfair criticism" of Hoover by a Senator whom they called "reprehensible" and "irresponsible" and one "whose ambition has far exceeded his ability." One letter, from Associate Director Clyde Tolson, openly wondered "how many other esteemed career public servants will be maligned before your political balloon runs out of hot air."

SENATOR MCGOVERN, who has asked for a congressional investigation of Hoover, put the letters into the Congressional Record with an observation that they constitute "the reaction of stultified bureaucracy that sees itself threatened by criticism too long delayed."

The Senator appears in this dispute in the natural, readily understandable role of an announced candidate for President, but one wonders what inspired the 12 assistant directors and assorted lesser lights of the FBI to engage in an independent, unmandated, more or less objective defense of their director.



"Thank you for your spontaneous demonstration, men"