

Hoover, 70 Today, Says He Plans to Keep Post

WASHINGTON, Dec. 31 (UPI)—One day short of his 70th birthday, John Edgar Hoover seems as healthy and determined as he was the day he took over the Federal Bureau of Investigation more than 40 years ago to make it—and himself—something close to legends.

Most men are retired at 70, and some newspaper editorials suggested recently that Mr. Hoover might well join their ranks. But he said today:

"My health is good, the President has expressed confidence in me, I enjoy my work and feel completely competent to carry out all the demands of my job—why should I think about retirement?"

"I intend to continue to serve my country as director of the F.B.I. as long as my health and the confidence of the President and the American people will permit."

Mr. Hoover, who is spending the holidays near Miami, replied to written questions.

He said he expected to spend a "quiet, normal day" on his birthday tomorrow, New Year's Day, watching televised football bowl games.

Mr. Hoover will be able to stay in his post because of President Johnson, who praised him last May as a "magnifi-

F.B.I. Chief Cites President's Support—Defends Bureau Record in Rights Cases

cent public servant" and waived the requirement that public servants must retire at the age of 70.

A few weeks ago, Mr. Hoover tangled in public with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. over the bureau's role in enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Mr. Hoover called Dr. King "the most notorious liar" in the country. The controversy died down at a peace meeting between Dr. King and Mr. Hoover in Washington.

Mr. Hoover took occasion today to reply again to some of his critics.

Under the Civil Rights Law, he said, the bureau has no authority to make arrests for violations, nor can it protect individuals or demonstrators. He said:

"One of the major reasons for this misunderstanding is the fact that some so-called civil rights leaders have deliberately accused the F.B.I. of not performing its duties in protecting civil rights demonstrators. They know we do not have the authority to do so.

"The F.B.I. cannot and will

not exceed its authority in the civil rights field or any other field. We perform our duties according to the law and instructions from the Department of Justice."

However he may feel personally about the issues in which the bureau, becomes involved, Mr. Hoover said none of the political labels — conservative, moderate or liberal—fit.

"I do not consider matters from a political viewpoint, for I serve no political faction," he said. "Objectivity is my hallmark."

Mr. Hoover disclosed that he would ask Congress for 300 to 400 more agents. The F.B.I. now has about 6,300 agents and 7,800 other employes in Washington and in 56 field offices throughout the nation.

His goal, he said, is much the same as it was May 10, 1924, when he assumed command of the bureau. He expressed it this way:

"I have dedicated my life to law enforcement, and I have seen it come of age and be accepted as a profession worthy of respect and support.

"I would like to see a decline in our crime rate. Some citizens seem to feel the latter goal can never be achieved. Perhaps not, but we must not cease trying. I certainly never will give up."