

The Reluctant J. Edgar --Some Rare Criticism

Washington

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover caught some rare congressional criticism yesterday for his refusal to testify before the House Crime Committee.

The chairman said he could subpoena Hoover but he didn't want "to embarrass anyone."

Representative Claude Pepper (Dem-Fla.), chairman of the fledgling select committee, said it is "exceedingly regrettable" that Hoover — through an aide — declined to appear before his committee.

"I didn't know that any agency of Government, in regard to a legitimate matter, held itself to be immune from authorized committees of Congress," Pepper told a reporter.

Pepper was asked why the committee does not ask Attorney General John N. Mitchell, theoretically Hoover's boss, to direct the FBI chief to testify.

"I don't know whether the Attorney General has jurisdiction over the FBI or not," quipped Pepper in an oblique allusion to the FBI's reputation of independence.

Was he criticizing Hoover?

"I'm not criticizing him," answered Pepper. "I'm just expressing keen regret that it is the policy of any agency

of Government that it will appear only before the appropriations committees."

After inviting Hoover's testimony, Pepper received a reply about three weeks ago from Cartha D. DeLoach, assistant to the director. DeLoach informed Pepper that Hoover appeared only before the House and Senate appropriations committees.

Sessions of the House committee are always closed and the Senate closes its hearings whenever Hoover appears.

Representative Jerome Waldie (Dem-Calif.), another

committee member, was less reticent in his comments.

"This also concerns me because I think any executive agency has a responsibility to assist a congressional committee."

Was Waldie criticizing the FBI?

"I sure am," he snapped.

"After all, it was the Congress of the United States that created the FBI and it's the Congress of the United States which is seeking to improve law enforcement in the country," he declared.

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