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Hoover at 75 Bjt 400

By WILLIAM BARTON

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON AP - FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who turns 75 Jan. 1, told the nation's young people Saturday he hopes "to continue indefinitely in my service to America."

And he challenged youth to "act positively and tirelessly to protect the bright promise of America" just as, he said, "in my youth, I accepted this stern obligation of responsible citizenship."

In a message prepared for The Associated Press in connection with his approaching birthday, Hoover chose to write "an Open Letter to the Youth of America."

Although the country is entering an era "fraught with peril," Hoover said, the next decade also will be "bright with promise."

"Forces antagonistic to a free and just society," he said, "have always existed in America and constitute an inescapable heritage of citizenship."

"Lawlessness, violence and injustice existed during my youth. Corrupt and greedy men of high position violated public trust in their lust for power and wealth. Bigotry and prejudice divided our people."

Hoover declared that the country is entering the 1970s after a "decade of bewildering, often tragic, contradictions."

"To you, the youth of this country, the 1970s will offer the thrill of unprecedented opportunities," he said. "It will also impose the burden of awesome challenges."

"To you, inevitably, will pass the far-reaching consequences of our failures as well as the blessings of our accomplishments."

Among the nation's failures, Hoover listed crime and violence which, he added, "have already reached terrifying proportions and are clearly indicative of a moral deterioration and a pervasive contempt for properly constituted authority among many of our populace."

He also suggested "increasing numbers of our citizens," including many young people, "have witlessly forsaken the great principles and ideals upon which our nation was founded and upon which it has prospered, in irresponsible pursuit of instant change."

The country is troubled by "violent irresponsibility and apathy . . . continue to erode the very foundations of democratic government."

Nevertheless, he asserted, "My faith in youth has not diminished through the years."

"I have every confidence that you will rise to meet the enormous challenges now before this country."

Hoover, who became FBI director 45 years ago and has been with the Justice Department for more than 50 years, plans no special observance of his birthday.

He prefaced his announcement on his future by saying "health permitting" he will continue at his job. An FBI spokesman said he is in good health.

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