

Poor Marks for the F.B.I.

An institution that places itself above criticism cuts its bridges to vital realities, including those that dictate reforms in attitudes and procedures. It is with precisely such self-destructive insularity that the Federal Bureau of Investigation ordered 15 of its agents to drop their studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in protest against a professor's criticism of some of the bureau's opinions. Among the offending comments by Dr. Abraham S. Blumberg, an expert in law and sociology, was that J. Edgar Hoover has been director of the F.B.I. too long, with the result that a cult of his personality has tended to develop.

The high-handed response, which ironically will hurt the effectiveness of the F.B.I. more than that of the college, eloquently confirms Professor Blumberg's thesis. Dr. Donald Riddle, president of the college which is a unit of the City University, appropriately described as naive the F.B.I.'s apparent belief that it can send its agents to any college without running into some criticism of the bureau.

The episode serves as a reminder that autocracy tends to grow within institutions excessively protected from constant scrutiny by the elected officials of the government acting as watchdogs of the public interest.