

Hoover Praised

Top FBI Officials Attack McGovern

Washington

The FBI's top 12 officials have written letters to Senator George McGovern (Dem-S.D.) accusing him of unfairly criticizing FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover for political purposes. Associate Director Clyde Tolson, 70, the FBI's number two official and Hoover's closest friend, wrote McGovern:

"You are not the first person I have encountered during almost 50 years in Washington whose ambition has far exceeded his ability, and I cannot help wondering how many other esteemed career public servants will be maligned and abused before your political balloon runs out of hot air."

PUBLIC

McGovern, chattered by Tolson to make the letter public, yesterday put into the Congressional Record the texts of it and of other letters of denunciation from all 11 of the FBI's assistant directors, and from nine other FBI officials and agents in Washington.

Most of the letters bitterly criticized McGovern and flowingly praised Hoover. McGovern, who had called for a congressional investigation of Hoover's administration of the FBI, said in a statement also inserted in the record that the response by Hoover's key aides, "sometimes with almost hysterical vehemence, is the reaction of stultified bureaucracy that sees itself threatened by criticism too long delayed."

On February 28, McGovern released an anonymous letter on FBI stationery and a resolution by a group of New York law enforcement officers, both backing his call for an investigation. The letter purported to be written on behalf of 10 agents "between 27 and 31 years of age."

Other assistant directors who wrote to McGovern were James H. Gale, 49, with 31 years service; Ivan W. Conrad, 60, 27 years; John Mohr, 61, 37 years; L. M. Walters, 51, 29 years; W. Mark Felt, 57, 29 years; Al Rosen, 64, 27 years; Joseph J. Casper, 52, 29 years; Thomas E. Bishop, 53, 29 years; Nicholas P. Callahan, 67, 36 years; and Dwight J. Dalby, recently named an assistant director.

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ANONYMOUS

The letters from FBI officials and staffers especially criticized McGovern for releasing the anonymous letter, which was termed "reprehensible" and "irresponsible" and "a new low in your campaign to malign J. Edgar Hoover."

The letters, 13 of them dated March 1 or March 2, came mostly from officials with 25 years service or more.

The anonymous letter charged that the FBI had degenerated into a public relations operation for Hoover's reputation, and it agreed with a lengthy critique of Hoover and the bureau that was written by former FBI agent Jack Shaw.

Hoover pressured Shaw into resigning last September after other agents spotted parts of the critique Shaw had written about the FBI to a professor in his class at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

WRITERS

Assistant director William Saxby Tavel, 55, who has almost 30 years' service, wrote McGovern, "Because of my official position, I'm sure you will discount this as a mandatory defense of Mr. Hoover. It is not."

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