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Agnew Calls Hoover's Critics Politically Motivated

By ROY REED

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NEW ORLEANS, April 26—Vice President Agnew strongly defended J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation here today in an 11-page, 28-minute speech devoted entirely to the director, the agency and their critics.

He accused the several Democratic Presidential aspirants and others who have criticized Mr. Hoover of trying to make him and the bureau a political issue.

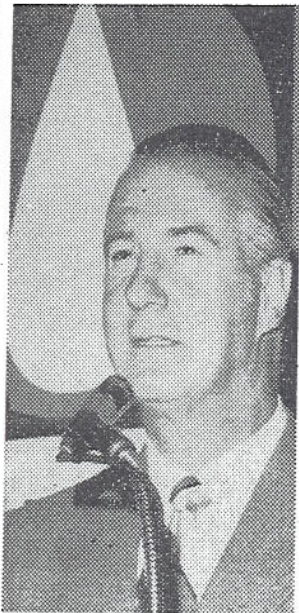
He discounted the critics' contention that Mr. Hoover at 76 years of age is too old to continue in the job.

"No, I think it is something more than age that is the real issue in the effort to drive J. Edgar Hoover out of office," Mr. Agnew said. "A more likely explanation is the fact that he is anathema to the New Left and extremists of every stripe, and he doesn't mince words in calling attention to them as dangerous to the country."

Critics Called 'Opportunists'

He added, "Personally, I have complete confidence in this dedicated, steel-willed public servant with the 20-20 vision into our national security and crime control problems and the institution that he has made the beacon of law enforcement in America. I am sure they will again triumph over their critics, and the American people will be the winners."

Mr. Agnew's was the most detailed defense of Mr. Hoover offered by the Nixon Adminis-



United Press International
Vice President Agnew making speech in New Orleans.

tration since the current round of criticism began.

His speech, delivered to several hundred cheering delegates to the Southern Gas Association convention, seemed to give notice that he was willing to fight the Hoover question as a political issue if the Democrats wanted it that way.

He denounced as "opportunists" the Democratic Presidential aspirants who have criticized Mr. Hoover.

Speaking of their attack, he said, "It gives off an unpleasant

political odor—perhaps for the first time in F.B.I. history—and it comes mainly from Presidential aspirants who apparently foresee some political accretion from the radical left if they challenge the integrity of the F.B.I., and its long-time director."

Mr. Agnew singled out two of the aspirants, Senators George S. McGovern of South Dakota and Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, for derision because of charges they had made against Mr. Hoover.

Referring to Mr. McGovern's recent assertion that "virtually every political figure, every student activist, every leader for peace and social justice is under the surveillance of the F.B.I.," Mr. Agnew said the agency had neither the time nor the manpower for the surveillance it was accused of maintaining on innocent persons.

He calculated that 2,140 of the bureau's 8,365 agents would be required just to watch the 535 members of Congress 24 hours a day—assuming, he said, that Mr. McGovern included all 535 as "political figures."

He challenged Mr. Muskie's charge that the bureau spied on him at last year's Earth Day activities in Washington.

Agents actually were there to watch "an incendiary radical, one Rennie Davis," one of the Chicago Seven conspiracy defendants, Mr. Agnew said. He quoted the bureau's report saying that Mr. Davis had called for tearing down the

capitalistic structure and had urged people to go to New Haven and stop the trial of Bobby G. Seale, the Black Panther leader.

The Vice President said that the bureau's total report on Mr. Muskie had been confined to one sentence: "Shortly after 8 P.M., Sen. Edmund Muskie (D) Maine, arrived and gave a short anti-pollution speech."

As for the director's age, Mr. Agnew noted that three Justices of the Supreme Court, 12 Senators and 14 members of the House of Representatives were over 70.

"And outside the government," he said, "we find many men in their 70's and 80's active and vigorous, including such spokesmen for the left as Cyrus Eaton, 87, Averell Harriman, 79, Herbert Marcuse, 72, Robert Hutchins, 72, and Linus Pauling, 70. Dr. Benjamin Spock, almost 68, does not qualify, but is moving up fast. However, he really doesn't seem to improve with age, so we have little to look forward to."

This was Mr. Agnew's eighth visit to New Orleans in 27 months. This is the home town of Hale Boggs, the House majority leader and one of the more vigorous recent critics of the bureau and Mr. Hoover. Mr. Agnew scoffed at Mr. Boggs's charge that his phone had been tapped by the F.B.I.

In a news conference on his arrival last night, Mr. Agnew said that the American people should not be misled "simply because some 0,000 demonstrators marched in the streets of Washington" in last week-