

## FBI Chief Prefers to Curry Favor With Southerners in Congress

# Hoover Could Do More Than Anyone Else to End Police Brutality

block of the "specific intent" requirement set up by the Screws case; another change to make it possible to sue cities and counties for damages in police brutality cases; and grants-in-aid to improve police training. But the man who could do most in this situation is J. Edgar Hoover. Three Federal inquiries in the past generation have shown that police brutality is widespread, and not confined to Negroes, Mexicans and Indians: the Wickersham Commission report in 1931, the Truman Committee in 1947 and now this Commission in 1961. In all these years Mr. Hoover has been head of the FBI, in charge of police training programs through the FBI's National Academy. The FBI, whatever its faults, has been trained to avoid rough stuff. Its example and Mr. Hoover's admonitions, if they were forthcoming, could do a great deal to make the brutal cop a shunned exception. But though the magazines and newspapers are full of articles in which he holds forth on juvenile delinquency, smutty books, Communism, hitch hikers and other of his favorite menaces, we do not ever remember his speaking out on the dangers of racism or the disgrace of police brutality. Commission attorneys reviewed the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin from January 1956 through August 1961 and found only one item dealing with civil rights, a piece by Roscoe Drummond flattering to the FBI.

### Few Complaints Ever Pressed

The Commission might have found it useful to study Mr. Hoover's annual appearances before the House Appropriations Committee. The hearings during the last ten years show not a single occasion on which Mr. Hoover has spoken against police brutality or for civil rights. On the contrary his presentation has been calculated to curry favor with the Southerners and reactionaries on the Committee. On one occasion he warned against Communist exploitation of the sitdown movement; on another he assured the Committee that civil rights cases are handled only "by mature special agents" (1959 hearing on the 1960 budget). The figures he gave on three occa-

### "But the Bombers Might Have Been Police!"

"Police connivance in lynching or in milder forms of private violence is less frequent now than in the past. Yet it lives on in the memory of thousands of Negroes and reinforces the deep fear that 'lightning' may strike again. For many Negroes this raises a question of profound importance: When it strikes will the police help me or will they help the mob? . . .

"In the late 1950s a member of the Commission's Alabama Advisory Committee was awakened in the middle of the night by a telephone call from a Negro woman who lived nearby. 'Somebody just threw a bomb and took off the side of our house. What shall I do?' The Committee member replied, 'Call the police right away and get them out there!' The woman said: 'I can't call the police. It might have been the police that threw the bomb. If they find out we're not dead, they might come back and throw another bomb.' The point is not that police officers threw the bomb, but that the instinctive reaction of one American citizen was that they might have had some connection with the attack."

—Civil Rights Commission Report: Justice, p. 43.

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sions showed how very few complaints against police officers result even in prosecution. Mr. Hoover has made it clear that the FBI acts in civil rights cases only because ordered to. Finally it is a pity that the Commission, in recommending prosecution by information (see box on page one) where Federal grand juries refuse to indict in Section 242 cases, fails to mention the biggest obstacle to this approach. It would require the FBI to sign the supporting affidavit. This the FBI does not want to do, for it would make it look like a crusader on civil rights. It prefers to crusade on safer subjects and against easier menaces.

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