

Politicized Police In The Making?

# Patrick Gray's 'New Improved' FBI

By John Jekabson  
Alternative Features Service

Last May, L. Patrick Gray, 56, an obscure naval officer and lawyer, was named temporary head of the FBI. Now as he is expected to come up for Senate confirmation, people are looking back fondly on "the good old days of J. Edgar Hoover," for in his short term in office, Patrick Gray has made the FBI an essentially political agency. Unlike Hoover, he is not above party politics but is a Nixon loyalist on assignment to make over the FBI to suit the present Administration's needs.

The directorship is not a Cabinet position, but it carries more power than almost all of Nixon's appointments, for once confirmed, the FBI chief has almost free rein. He is no longer answerable to Congress for any of his actions and can use the bureau's 8,000 agents, 11,000 clerks and \$300 million budget as he wishes. Whereas Hoover had hardly ever left his Washington sanctum, Gray took the unprecedented step during the Presidential campaign of traveling throughout the country, echoing Nixon's policies in public speeches. Hoover, however, never made political speeches on behalf of any president or presidential candidate. Naturally, Gray tried to disguise his cross-country tour as merely a way of "informing the public on law enforcement problems" while he covered 60,000 miles and gave major addresses in 14 key states.

In September, he asked 21 FBI field offices to supply important information to the Republican Election Committee "in order for John Ehrlichman to give the President maximum support during campaign trips over the next

several weeks." Under Hoover such a request would never have been honored.

According to a close former aide of Hoover, he wanted the bureau to be free of politics and become "an organization to which you could go no matter what your politics." During his long reign, though Hoover was rightly condemned for his outlandish views on radical causes, he was never accused of favoritism toward either of the two established political parties. His favoritism was always to the FBI, in that it could get at the truth, no matter whose toes had to be stepped on. No one questioned the FBI's findings even though they contradicted the Nixon Administration's statements on the ITT case a few months before Hoover died.

Just the opposite has been true of the FBI under Gray. More questions were raised than answered by the bureau's investigation of the Watergate affair. It is quite evident that Gray has personally been responsible for his toning down the investigation in order to save some of his former colleagues from embarrassment. Though the agency has often repeated that it launched a "massive probe" of the case, independent sources and newspaper reporters have found themselves far ahead of the "crack" investigators from the FBI.

Agents assigned to the case were told not to follow any leads without the approval of the Justice Department and Richard Kleindienst, an exercise designed to cause delays and frustrations. When investigators met with a wall of silence at the White House, Gray refused to intercede with

Nixon to force cooperation; instead he urged agents to go slower. Even before the probe was complete, Gray said in public, "It strains the credulity to believe that President Nixon or the White House could have perpetuated a con job on the American people in the Watergate incident."

The fact that Watergate was just part of a larger Republican espionage scheme was too big a story to stay long hidden. But when it was broken it was done by reporters doing intensive research, not the FBI. In fact, Gray tried to contain the story by minimizing its importance. In two apparently unrelated moves, he transferred the head of the Washington office, Robert Kunkel, and his assistant director, Charles Bates, to other parts of the country. What the two men had in common was that they had been in charge of the Watergate investigation and both had talked freely with journalist friends.

Gray's ability to gloss over scandal and place his loyalty to Richard Nixon above the independence of the FBI has earned him opposition from liberal Congressmen who will bitterly oppose his confirmation. There is also wide opposition to Gray within the FBI itself.

Many of Hoover's old hands are dismayed by his lack of law enforcement experience and want a professional lawman for the post. There is nothing in Gray's background to suggest he has the experience or the competence to run a complex and powerful police organization—he has no police experience of any sort. Most of his adult life has been spent in the Navy as a submarine commander. In 1960, he left the service to work in Nixon's first presidential campaign. Afterwards, he practiced law in Connecticut until 1968 when he again joined Nixon's election staff. Then he was rewarded with a high—though not a major—position in the Justice Department.

Before he was appointed to the FBI post, the only time his name came before the public was in 1971 when he headed a group of government officials who obtained a court injunction forbidding antiwar Vietnam veterans from camping in Washington, D. C. After the veterans ignored the injunction, he did nothing. This left several federal judges fuming at him for his incompetence.

Later that same year, he played a role in the drawn-out confirmation hearings on Richard Kleindienst for Attorney General. Gray coached Kleindienst during the ITT probe and made sure the Justice Department's files on ITT could never be seen by the Congressional investigation committee. All in all, his main qualification for the FBI post is his devotion and loyalty to Richard Nixon and the men who serve him.

The bureau that Gray is inheriting is riddled with administrative chaos, for Hoover in his last years was unable to keep up with the demands that placed domestic radical activity and civil rights questions under the FBI's auspices. Publicly Gray praises Hoover, saying "No one can replace the Giant," while he quietly tries to clean up the administrative mess.

Gray's most visible talent so far has been a flair for public relations. He has captured headlines by proposing a "shakeup and modernization" of the FBI. Part

of this includes accepting women agents for the first time, and recruiting more blacks and other minority members as agents. He has also relaxed the outdated rules on dress and appearance. Now agents can have longish hair and moustaches and wear mod clothing. All of these changes have been revealed to the press as part of his new "open window" policy toward the media.

Among the upper echelons, many of the Old Guard are upset by his "modernization" which has purged lots of the older agents from the bureau. The scope of the dissension is seen in the Watergate case. The FBI has often "leaked" stories to the press for its own purposes, but they have always done so at the director's wish. The leaks about the Republican espionage scandal came not from the chief but from anti-Gray people who wanted to contradict his toned-down reports of the findings.

Though there is widespread opposition to Gray, he is expected to be approved, along with the rest of the crew selected by Nixon to run the country for the next four years.

Despite his relaxation of the FBI's hair and dress, the new director has little to say on certain matters of great importance. When he first took the post, for instance, he said that there were no secret dossiers on Congressmen "that I know about." Later, when such documents were shown to exist, he said they would be des-

troyed. What he failed to mention is that under the bureau's complex cross-filing system, it is virtually impossible to wipe out any of the records.

The one thing that could stop Gray is his health—he recently had an intestinal operation. Barring that, the country is not expected to find out many of the facts about recent Republican scandals. In the meantime, the press—if it can remain free—will have to become even more active in ferreting out scandal and corruption in the halls of power.

## Services Today For Dr. W. M. Potts

Funeral services for Dr. William M. Potts, professor emeritus of chemistry at Texas A&M University, were to be held at 4 p.m. today at the A&M Church of Christ.

Dr. Potts died early Monday at a local nursing home at the age of 80.

He served on the Texas A&M faculty 33 years until retirement in 1958.

Survivors are his wife, Mrs. Eris Potts of College Station, sons Dr. William E. Potts of Denver, Colo., and Dr. Robert C. Potts of Houston; five grandchildren, a sister and brother.

Memorial gifts may be made to the A&M Church of Christ Library for Dr. Potts.

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## CADET SLOUCH

by Jim Earle



"I'm afraid I'll flunk out unless this good weather ends soon!"

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