

KELLEY PANEL SET FOR WIDE DEBATE

Role of F.B.I. Will Be Issue

—Confirmation Expected

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. June 17 —Although Police Chief Clarence M. Kelley is expected to win speedy confirmation as the new director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, some Senators plan to use his nomination as a platform for further debate about law and order issues in general and the role of the bureau in particular.

City officials here and Senate officials in Washington say the 61-year-old chief, who goes before the Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, will be questioned closely by such liberal Democrats as Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Philip A. Hart of Michigan.

They reportedly will ask him how much independence he has been promised by the White House, how long he thinks he should hold office, how he would regulate electronic surveillance and how he would improve police relations with blacks.

Effect of Watergate

Further, the Senators may attempt to extract a promise from the chief that he will return periodically to Capitol Hill, after his confirmation, for reviews of F.B.I. practices and performance.

Hanging over the hearings will be the Watergate scandal, which has stained the once pristine image of the F.B.I. and shattered the morale of its 8,500 agents.

L. Patrick Gray 3d, the retired Navy officer originally nominated to fill the job that the late J. Edgar Hoover stubbornly held for 47 years, resigned after it was disclosed that he had destroyed files allegedly relating to Watergate.

Since his nomination by President Nixon on June 7, Chief Kelley has deliberately avoided discussing either the scandal or controversial law enforcement subjects, explaining that he would save his comments for the Judiciary Committee.

His public statements from



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Clarence M. Kelley in his office in Kansas City, Mo., recently.

earlier days provide few clues as to what he will say now that the committee is about to convene. In his 33 years as a lawman, including 21 as an F.B.I. agent, he has managed to stay in the middle of the road. He said in a typical interview:

"I subscribe to the theory

that society has to place some restrictions on the police. The police, after all, constantly are depriving people of liberty.

"But the pendulum can swing too far the other way. There is no question that police activity can be hampered by a too-severe interpretation of constitutional rights."

Thus far, it appears that no one has turned up any information that might cause the Senate to reject Chief Kelley's nomination. Rather, investigations by Senate aides and newsmen have uncovered a record of uncommon competence.

That would seem to leave but one question: Once he has been confirmed, can Chief Kelley restore the F.B.I. to its proud place in American life?

"I don't see any great difficulty," he said during a brief interview, adding: "The people of the United States kind of accept motherhood and the F.B.I."

'Old Boy' Network

The fact that the chief was an agent for 21 years before taking the job here, his hometown, will undoubtedly be of great help.

The "old boy" network is particularly strong in law enforcement, and many F.B.I. men still regard the chief as "one of us," a man who knows how things work. On the other hand, he has been away from the bureau long enough to be free of the factionalism that has splintered agent ranks lately.

By law, the chief can hold office until he reaches 70. That means nine years to do the job, unless some President ousts him. This is long enough to get things moving but not long enough to destroy the ambitions of the eager, younger men below.