

FBI to Recruit Women Special Agents

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L. PATRICK GRAY III
... break with tradition

Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III plans to announce today that women may apply for positions as special agents of the bureau for the first time in the agency's history.

Justice Department sources said that Gray decided yesterday to make the sharp break with the FBI's men-only tradition after discovering—to his apparent surprise—that there was little opposition to the move among the bureau's 15 powerful assistant directors.

At a meeting with the assistant directors and other top FBI officials yesterday, Gray also ordered a staff

study of how the bureau can increase the number of blacks, Spanish-speaking Americans and American Indians among its corps of 8,600 agents.

Gray said after the meeting that he would take "a vigorous approach" to the recruitment of more minority-group members.

"I want to convince these people that the Federal Bureau of Investigation belongs to all of the people of the United States," Gray said in an interview.

In another effort to create a new image for the director's office run by J. Edgar Hoover for almost half a century, Gray named three lawyers with a maximum

age of 30—one of them a woman—to be his special assistants.

They are David D. Kinley, 30; Barbara L. Herwig, 27; and Daniel M. Armstrong III, 30. All three were on his personal staff while he was assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Division.

Gray will take them, as well as two secretaries, along when he moves into Hoover's office this weekend.

Only a week after Hoover's burial, Gray has also told the Washington Field Office of the FBI that he will relax the tight "groom-

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ing and appearance standards" that required bureau agents to wear white shirts and to maintain short sideburns and close-cropped hair.

His proposed regulations will permit FBI agents to have sideburns down to the ear and hair down to the shirt collar.

In the interview yesterday, Gray said that the agents in the Washington office reacted "like a group of young schoolboys released" when he told them that "I have no hangups about white shirts."

It is Gray's decision to welcome—and to encourage—applications from women that is expected to cause some grumbling among the FBI rank-and-file faithful to Hoover and the disciplined image he built for the bureau.

Ironically, as assistant attorney general, Gray was responsible for defending Hoover against a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union to strike down the men-only requirement as unconstitutional.

That lawsuit would pre-

sumably be dismissed by U.S. District Court here after the ban on women is dropped.

Current FBI regulations require that all applicants for the position of special agent be male U.S. citizens willing to serve "anywhere" who are between 23 and 41 and at least 5'7" tall, have good vision and hearing, a driver's license and "no defects" that would interfere with the use of firearms or participation in "raids, dangerous assignments or defensive tactics."

They must also be graduates of law school or accounting majors in college who have had one year of experience in that profession.

The FBI has been accepting applications recently from a limited number of college graduates in the physical sciences or those

who are fluent in languages of special interest to the bureau, as well as men with three years of "specialized experience of a professional, executive or complex investigative nature."

The Justice Department

sources said yesterday that while Gray is expected to establish "different physical standards" for female FBI agents, women would otherwise be "treated equally in all respects" and assigned the same law enforcement duties as men.

While the bureau currently has a surplus of applicants for available agent positions, Gray may also institute a procedure of processing women applicants "more rapidly" until several have been accepted for service, the sources said.

The sources noted, however, that it may be years before the FBI has a large number of women agents and substantially more minority-group members, because those groups are currently under represented among law students and experienced accountants.

The FBI now has about 120 black and native Spanish-speaking agents, Gray said yesterday. This represents less than 1.5 per cent of the bureau's 8,600 agents.

The acting director also announced his intention to establish an Advisory Committee composed of law enforcement and human behavior experts outside the bureau and a Director's Staff Group for policy planning and evaluation, which will be selected from "the best possible minds" within the FBI.