

Phila. FBI Agents Express Shock and Shame at

Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in Philadelphia expressed shock and shame yesterday that former acting director I. Patrick Gray 3d linked the agency to the Watergate scandal.

Gray resigned from the FBI on Friday after it was disclosed that he placed files belonging to a principal in the Watergate case in his "burn-bag" for destruction.

In a statement announcing his resignation, Gray said the FBI was "in no way involved in any of those personal acts or judgments . . ." but many agents said the bureau's image was tarnished just the same.

Police Corruption

"For some time we have been hearing a lot about police corruption, not only in Philadelphia but in other cities, too," one veteran of the Philadelphia office said. "We'd throw up our hands in horror, but now, like a shot out of a cannon, it hits home.

"Here we have our No. 1 man being linked to the biggest scandal since the Teapot Dome."

The agent, who could retire tomorrow, said morale is low among agents, but not so low as to warrant wholesale resignations.

Another agent who served under the late J. Edgar Hoover, the bureau's first director, said destruction of documents never occurred under his regime.

Hoover's Way

"Nobody, and I mean nobody, told J. Edgar Hoover what to do." The agent added that "everything was done his way or not at all, and that way was straight down the middle."

He conceded that in their conservative dress of dark suits, coats, hats and ties, "we looked like a bunch of first-year seminarians," but the discipline carried over into work habits.

"His system worked. Today

all of that is over.

"The young guys wear what they want," he said, "and it's their year."

Next Chief?

Not only has the FBI's image been clouded by the Watergate scandal, the agent added, "but now our big worry is who is the next one to run the FBI?"

A number of agents sampled in the Philadelphia area said that in the agents' ranks Gray was looked upon as "one step away from being a political appointee."

"He was a good man, but he listened to politicians instead of doing the job of being director of the FBI," said another.

Many agents said they felt a year ago when Gray was named acting director that they doubted he was the man for the job. "He just didn't know the score. He allowed himself to be boxed in by politicians."

'Darkest Sin'

Gray's "darkest sin" among agents, they said, was allowing the destruction of records. A retired FBI agent said, "I just can't imagine anything being sent to the FBI headquarters and being destroyed. That would have been a mortal sin."

He was willing to bet that

Hoover's papers are still intact. "If you could get into his files, you would find papers and files from the day he was appointed."

Another agent, with the bureau less than 10 years, found it easier to accept the cloud casting a shadow on the bureau's image.

"After all," he said, "it seems to be happening all over. Look at politics in the cities.

Getting Train Back

"I wasn't crazy about Hoover," he added, "but I wish we could have him back. I know, of course, that we can't,

Gray's Actions

but it will be quite a while before the whole train gets back on the track."

It hasn't taken long for the agents to feel public reaction.

"I went out on an interview," an agent said yesterday. "I showed my identification and said I was from the FBI, and the man I was to interview

smiled and said, 'Is this going to turn up in the burn-bag or the shredder?'"

The reference was to the disclosure last week that Gray was summoned to the White House last June 28 and John W. Dean 3d, counsel to President Nixon, gave him two files.

Gray has said he believes it

was Dean who admonished him that "These papers should never see the light of day."

He told associates that he took the two files home and then subsequently to his office, where they were placed in either a shredder or a burn-bag with other material for destruction or burning.