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'Courtesies' for V.I.P.'s

To the Editor:

"This man was a former Attorney General of the United States, and I think we [the Federal Bureau of Investigation] would have accorded that courtesy to any person in a position like that" (news story, March 4).

Thus explained L. Patrick Gray 3d, acting head of the F.B.I., when questioned why his agency did not question Mrs. John N. Mitchell, wife of the former Attorney General, about the Watergate incident after Mr. Mitchell refused permission. Mr. Gray said the F.B.I. did not pursue the subject with the Mitchells "as a matter of courtesy."

If President Nixon's nomination of Mr. Gray as permanent head of the F.B.I. is approved, just how effective can this agency be if its investigations stop above a certain level of "position," "as a matter of courtesy?"

At what level in government does an official, present or former (or member of his family) become eligible to receive these "courtesies" from the F.B.I.? Is there a corresponding level of "position" in nongovernmental circles above which the F.B.I. will also extend these "courtesies?"

C. L. HEROLD
Darien, Conn., March 4, 1973