

Charles de Young Thieriot, Editor and Publisher
George T. Cameron, Publisher 1925 to 1955
Founded 1865 by Charles and M. H. de Young

SFChronicle
Editorials

APR 9 1973

Innocent Victim Of Watergate

THE BUGS THAT NOTORIOUSLY infested Democratic headquarters in Washington's Watergate hotel have spread their poison far beyond anticipation and found a belated and innocent victim in L. Patrick Gray III, esteemed by President Nixon as "an able, honest and dedicated American."

At Gray's behest, and in the knowledge that his confirmation had skidded into the realm of the impossible, the President has withdrawn his nomination of Gray to succeed J. Edgar Hoover as director of the FBI.

The President has said that he did so "regretfully," though there is a body of opinion which holds that his regret was tempered by considerable relief, inasmuch as Gray's testimony in what he called "the pit" of the Senate's Judiciary Committee undoubtedly caused embarrassment at the White House.

GRAY HAD ADMITTED that as acting director of the FBI he supplied raw FBI files to the President's counsel, John W. Dean III; that he permitted Dean to sit in on FBI interrogation of White House officials, though White House connections with the Watergate bugging were at issue; and that in his opinion Dean had "probably lied" to the investigators. Thereafter, on orders from the Attorney-General he revoked his offer to supply FBI files to the Senators, and forced the President into a new conflict with Congress over its intent to interrogate members of the White House staff.

Among Senators whose reluctance to confirm Gray was great and growing, there was agreement that the Watergate Affair had done him in. Some expressed both respect and sympathy for him. One angrily asserted that the White House had "cut the wrong man adrift," and a third observed that the independence of the FBI had become the crucial issue.

They are now awaiting the President's second choice, with the avowed hope that it will be a man able to avoid political pressures and maintain full public confidence in the FBI, like the late J. Edgar Hoover. Such a man, some think, may be hard to find.