

White House Urged a Speech by Gray

NYTimes MAR 6 1973

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 5—The White House urged the acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to accept a speaking invitation in Cleveland last summer because Ohio was believed to be "crucially vital" to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

This was disclosed today in a memorandum from Patrick E. O'Donnell, a former Presidential assistant, to L. Patrick Gray 3d.

The memorandum, provided by the F.B.I. to the Senate Judiciary Committee, was included in copies of papers requested last week by members of the committee, which is holding hearings on Mr. Gray's nomination as permanent successor to the late J. Edgar Hoover.

The memorandum, written on White House stationery, advised Mr. Gray that the City Club of Cleveland "has asked our assistance in attempting to secure your participation as a key speaker" sometime in the next few weeks. It added:

"With Ohio being crucially vital to our hopes in November, we would hope you will assign this forum some priority in planning your schedule."

Mr. Gray had become acting F.B.I. director following Mr. Hoover's death six weeks earlier.

On the first day of hearings last week, Mr. Gray acknowledged to the Senators that he had been asked to make the Cleveland appearance by a Nixon campaign official but he said that the decision to do so had been his own. He denied that it had been intended as a contribution to Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign, but rather to carry "the F.B.I.'s message to the people."

In the Aug. 11 speech, Mr. Gray criticized "those who insist that our priceless liberties are being eroded—that freedom is increasingly in jeopardy across the United States." He cited statistics that he said showed "the upward thrust of crime is being turned back" and said that the country's economy was "on the threshold of the greatest growth in our history."

President Nixon, asked at a news conference last week whether the White House had enlisted Mr. Gray as a surrogate campaigner, replied that it was his intention that the former Navy captain must remain "a nonpartisan figure."

Questioned specifically about

the O'Donnell memorandum, Mr. Nixon replied: "If there was anything indicating that during the campaign we were trying to enlist him in that, it certainly didn't have my support and would not have it now."

Tough Question Feared

Three days after the receipt of the O'Donnell memorandum by Mr. Gray's office, a bureau official prepared a second memorandum for internal use on the nature of the forum for the proposed speech.

The report, dated June 16, states that "the Cleveland office has advised that the City Club has no political connections and actually the majority of the members could be classified as 'liberals.'" It cautioned that "the club engages in discussing controversial subjects and it is entirely possible that some embarrassing questions could be put to Mr. Gray which might prove embarrass-

ing to him and the bureau."

But, the memorandum said, "these are the type of people we should be contacting in an effort to 'convert them.'"

On June 27, Thomas E. Bishop, at the time assistant director in charge of the F.B.I.'s crime records division, who has since retired, informed the acting associate director, Mark Felt, that Mr. Gray had agreed to make the speech and that he, Mr. Bishop, had "advised Patrick E. O'Donnell of the White House, through whom the invitation had been extended."

On June 28, Larry Robinson, who had arranged the Gray speech on behalf of the City Club, wrote to thank Mr. Gray for agreeing to come and said that Mr. O'Donnell "has been enormously helpful to us and we are writing at his suggestion."

The Judiciary Committee will resume its questioning of Mr. Gray tomorrow morning.