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New FBI Image

-- Women Agents

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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 8600 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 this 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,

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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 "grooming and appearance standards" that required Bureau agents to wear white shirts and to maintain short sideburns and crewcuts.

REGULATIONS

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

In the interview yesterday, Gray said that the agents in the Washington office reacted "like 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.

The Justice Department sources said 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 services, the sources said.

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 8600 agents.