

Mr. Nixon Has Tattletale Gray



Arthur Hoppe

FOR SHEER political viciousness, no one can fault the way an angry Congress handled the President's nomination of L. Patrick Gray to be head of the FBI in the spring of 1973.

White House lobbying concerning the appointment was intense. Take, for example, a typical phone call received by Republican Senator (Name Withheld).

"Well, well, Senator Withheld. How are things going over there on Capitol Hill?"

"Is that you, sir? I didn't recognize your voice. It's been so long since you haven't been speaking to us."

"Not speaking to you, Senator? Nonsense. Just because you congressmen support outrageous spending programs that are sending this country to heck in a handbasket, there's no hard feelings."

"Just the way we feel, sir, about your abrogating our powers, unconstitutionally impounding funds, abusing executive privilege and taking the bread out of the mouths of the poor."

"Well, let's not get into that, Senator. What I called you about was my nomination of L. Patrick Gray to be head of the FBI."

"Oh, don't worry about that, sir. Because of my deep and abiding loyalty to you, you can count on me to back his nomination 100 per cent."

"I can? Are you out of your . . . I mean, that's — uh — swell."

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"YES, SIR. When you said you were standing behind him, some people intimated that you were planning to let us kill the nomination for you over here. But I know you wouldn't do a thing like that. If he's good enough for you, he's good enough for us."

"He is? I mean don't you think he's perhaps too political?"

"If you want to appoint an old political crony of yours to that delicate post, sir, I say that's your right. Who cares what the American public thinks?"

"Oh. Yes, I guess you have a point there. But didn't it bother you that he blew the whistle on my White House counsel, John Dean? In fact, he called him a liar."

"You're absolutely right, sir. That's what the FBI needs at the top — a thoroughly honest man."

"Yes. And then the way Gray told you he was supplying us with raw data from the FBI files . . ."

"Open and honest, sir. You can't beat that."

"I see the press is calling him 'Tattletale Gray.' Don't you feel that smacks of being a stool pigeon?"

"Exactly, sir. The FBI's always depended on stool pigeons. So Gray's a man they can depend on."

"Damn it! Look here, Senator . . ."

"Excuse me, sir. I have to go vote on the nomination. And thank you for not withdrawing it. This gives us a chance to show how we're backing you these days. To the hilt, sir. To the hilt."

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SO IN A vicious political ploy, the Senate confirmed Mr. Gray 99-0. He was sworn in at a dramatic ceremony the following week in the White House Rose Garden.

"I can't tell you what a pleasure this is for me, Mr. Gray," said the President, clutching his stomach.

"And I can't tell you, sir," said Mr. Gray, "how delighted I am to have this opportunity after all you've done for me."

And with that, he drew 14 warrants and a .38. "Freeze," he said. "This is the FBI!"