

Perspective

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O'Grady resigns with head high



JAMES O'GRADY did the right thing by resigning as Chicago police superintendent.

He left police headquarters with his head held high rather than with his tail between his legs.

He didn't hang around to get fired. And although his abrupt departure may have caught Mayor Byrne by surprise, it did nothing to disrupt her plans to maneuver former New York Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy into the job.

Had O'Grady elected to hang on until Mayor Byrne selected a successor, he would have been a lame duck leader of the worst order.

All 13,000 Chicago police officers would have known he was on the way out. The dissidents would have had a field day thumbing their noses at him.

And his authority would have been so diluted that his effectiveness as an administrator and commander would have been crippled.

SO **JIMMY O'GRADY** did the smart thing. He bailed out before Mrs. Byrne showed him the door. And whether or not he remains with the department, his pride will be intact.

O'Grady leaves the department in good shape. Its morale is high. The crime rate is down.

And unless the new administration moves to politicize the department itself, Mrs. Byrne has no reason to fear that some Democratic ward committeemen and aldermen will again be able to interfere in police policy or operations.

Sure, during the year that O'Grady was superintendent, he had to swallow some command appointments pushed on him by City Hall. There isn't a police superintendent in the history of Chicago who didn't have to contend with the same.

Nor is there a private business anywhere where department heads aren't subject to the dictates of the board chairman, in this case, the mayor of Chicago.

HOWEVER...ON EACH occasion that O'Grady had to accept someone not necessarily of his choice, he moved to monitor their influence by placing officers loyal to him in adjacent spots.

He made certain that if any shenanigans were attempted, he would learn about them.

And that subtle management technique won the admiration of federal and state law enforcement agencies that often must share sensitive secrets with Chicago Police Department personnel.

Now, O'Grady is out. Samuel W. Nolan, a highly respected black with more than 30 years of police service and first deputy superintendent for the last year, is the

acting chief.

Nolan has said he is available for the job but will not actively seek it, in apparent deference to Mrs. Byrne's repeated wishes to appoint an out-of-towner.

BUT FIRST, some formalities must be observed.

The new Chicago Police Board appointed by Mrs. Byrne and headed by former Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi will have to perform the mechanics of selecting three candidates for her perusal. And from that list, the mayor will be required to make her choice.

After meeting last week with Mrs. Byrne, Murphy made clear he would accept the job, if selected by the new police board. And Mrs. Byrne made clear she favors Murphy.

But, before Mrs. Byrne locks herself into the same type of uncompromising corner that forced O'Grady's resignation, she ought to examine Sam Nolan's qualifications over those of an outsider.

Nolan has been the department's top ranking black for nearly 10 years. His color, however, has nothing to do with his credentials.

Nor should a batch of black ministers waving their arms outside of Mayor Byrne's office in an unsolicited demonstration for Nolan have any impact either.

HOWEVER, NOLAN has these advantages as a candidate for the most sensitive post in any mayoral administration:

He is a Chicago cop. He knows the city. He knows the police department. He knows its personalities and its nuances. He knows who has been good or bad.

Nolan enjoys the respect of a majority of Chicago police officers. He is well thought of by the community. His integrity is intact.

And, to the best of my knowledge, Sam Nolan is no racist. I would not expect him to load the department brass with incompetent blacks any more than with incompetent whites.

Just as important, Nolan handles himself well publicly. He can articulate department policies and problems, an essential quality in an era of mass media. He also is a decent man.

None of the foregoing represents an attempt to pressure Mayor Byrne in Nolan's behalf. She is entitled to select her own police superintendent because her political fortunes could well depend on the conduct of that office.

If being an outsider is a qualification she deems most necessary for the post, so be it. But first, she should examine her options closely, for her sake and for the sake of Chicago.