

# Mark Felt's Viewpoint: Worthy of Deep Throat

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who did the so-called black bag jobs, had any doubts that they were acting in the best interests of their country — and, regrettably, in the best tradition of the FBI. Some of the agents probably thought what they were doing was legal, while others probably never gave the matter any thought at all. As for Felt and Miller, they entered the standard defense: They were following orders.

And indeed they were. J. Edgar Hoover, for one, thought there was nothing wrong with an occasional black bag job and so, for that matter, did his boss, Richard M. Nixon. But Nixon, it is now clear, felt he had the authority to do whatever he wanted to whomever he wanted. As for L. Patrick Gray III, Nixon's choice to-succeed Hoover, he was the one, you may remember, who thought destroying Watergate evidence was part of a good day's work. At the FBI you can find precedence for anything.

The case reeks of stereotypes. You have the cliched I-was-only-following-orders defense balanced against

just as cliched oaths about the power of government, especially the awful power of awful government. What tends to get lost is the subtle human dilemma of men who get caught committing a crime that they did not think was a crime and which at any rate they committed for what they thought was the good of the country. This is not a case of someone abusing his power for his own good, but a case of someone abusing his power for the good of the nation. It seems there ought to be a distinction.

Now let me get back to Deep Throat. To me, to those of us in the press and to a whole lot of other people, he is a hero. But to plenty of others, I bet, he is no hero at all. He is something of a blabbermouth, a man who took it upon himself to decide when and under what circumstances he would leak secrets to the press. Had he been caught, he would have had to answer for his actions, and no explanation having to do with "the good of the country" would have washed. Someone would have shown him the boundless government laws concerning secrets and asked him which one authorized him to open up such a big mouth.

It is the same with the real-life Felt. I sympathize with him and Miller and I do not think they were evil men: But neither they nor the FBI nor even the president can break the law with impunity and

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MARK FELT  
... convicted of illegal searches

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then excuse themselves by citing "the good of the country." It is too slippery a standard. To Deep Throat it meant one thing and to Mark Felt it meant something else, even though the two may turn out to be one and the same person. If you put a lot of stock in heroes, this would mean that the

same person could be both a hero and a villain to the left and both a hero and a villain to the right.

What this really means, of course, is that the Founding Fathers were on to something when they based the government on laws and not on men. And if they were right about that, then Mark Felt was wrong when he thought that he has some special dispensation to break the law just because he had a firm view of what would be in the best interests of the country. Deep Throat had a similarly firm view, and what he was saying, more or less, was beware of Mark Felt. Something tells me he was in a position to know.

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