

# New Legislation Urged To Stop Wire-Tapping

By ALPHONZO BELL, Congressman, 28th District  
 People familiar with international intrigue were not overly surprised last year when 40 microphones were discovered embedded in the walls of our embassy in Moscow. United States missions operate on the assumption that every attempt is made to penetrate our operations. More surprising are intricate surveillance methods used outside international espionage. Highly sophisticated devices are employed by our federal government, law enforcement agencies, corporations, private investigators, meddlers and even amusement-seekers. The result is rampant invasion of personal privacy.

Although wiretapping is probably the most prevalent, a multitude of monitoring techniques is available to an "investigator" — and anyone may be the target. Among the relatively simple electronic devices is a thumbnail-size transmitter, with a range of three city blocks and infinite possibilities for concealment. A martini olive may be a transmitter unit, with the toothpick as the antenna. The agent need not be deprived of his drink as he alertly circulates through a cocktail party, for the olive listens even when covered with liquid.

Highly sensitive gear has made obsolete the necessity of access to the area being monitored. In addition to telephone "taps" that can be inserted anywhere on a line, there are microphones which can listen through heavy walls and doors and tiny transmitters capable of being sewn into the clothing of people who have not agreed to carry them. Just as insidious in the wrong hands are parabolic microphones that amplify whispers over distances outdoors and transform the sounds into intelligible words. Further development will enable individuals to use a laser beam to pick up vibrations from a conversation by playing the beam from one window to another.

It was estimated in 1964 that there were at least 10,000 hidden transmitters operating each day in the United States. This prevalence is due in some part to the difficulty of detecting the devices used to invade privacy. Often the individual being "bugged" has no idea his conversations are overheard. And if he did know, he would have little recourse aside from attempting to remove the devices. This is one area in which laws at federal and state levels are ill-defined, usually at variance with one another, and most often inadequate.

Especially revealing of the extent of surveillance have been hearings held by the Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure of the Senate Judiciary Committee to ascertain the depth of federal involvement in certain investigative techniques. Findings and implications as to incursions on private lives both by government and by individuals force one to come to grips with the moral aspects of this subject. Because of disclosures before

the subcommittee, in fact, President Johnson recently banned all wiretapping by federal employees except when national security is concerned. This is not enough. There should also be clarification of laws at all levels. Methods

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other than wiretapping, to be endangered. To use in an ward which most of the age of science and bursting existing statues are geared population human problems must be considered as calls for discernment, discre- tion, and decision. Listening devices may be needed to protect us.

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