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Celler Says Wiretapping Policy May Be Leading to Police State

WASHINGTON, April 25 (UPI)—Representative Emanuel Celler, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said today that the Attorney General's wiretapping policies might be leading the nation toward a police state.

Meanwhile, Representative Hale Boggs, the House majority leader, urged Congressional investigation of all Government surveillance activities.

Mr. Celler, Democrat of Brooklyn, said that he had no evidence that his or any other Congressman's telephones were tapped, but that fear of being overheard had inhibited them all in their conversations.

Representative Boggs, Democrat of Louisiana, expressed the same view, saying "there is hardly a member of the House who is not fearful of using his telephone."

Mr. Celler discussed Government eavesdropping in an interview. Mr. Boggs gave his views on the Columbia Broadcasting System television program "Face the Nation."

Mr. Celler, who opposes any use of electronic surveillance, said Attorney General John N. Mitchell "want to tap wires without a court order when, in his opinion, the national security is involved—now that's a huge umbrella that can cover thousands of actions."

"Who is to be judge of national security? he asked. "He is to be the judge? That's not government by law, that's government by personality."

Representative Boggs said, "Attorney General Mitchell is obsessed with tapping wires. He believes in the unlimited right to tap the wires of Americans without a court order."

"I'm going to insist that normal [Congressional] oversight be instituted," Mr. Boggs declared. He has charged that the Federal Bureau of Investigation taps Congressmen's phones.

Mr. Celler was asked if he believed that the United States was tending toward a police state.

"We may be tending that way. If, for example, there are no brakes placed upon the right of the Attorney General to tap wires, especially as he wants it, we're certainly heading towards a police state."

Friday, in a defense of wiretapping and Government surveillance, Mr. Mitchell supported the Administration's use of national security taps without a court order against domestic dissidents, on the grounds that the greatest threat to the United States comes from within.