VA Hospital Accused of Phone Bugs

Post 8/21/75

Associated Press

William Proxmire [illegible] yesterday accused the VA hospital in Nashville, Tenn., of illegally recording telephone conversations and misusing research funds.

Proxmire, chairman of the Senate subcommittee in charge of VA appropriations, said he based his charges on a report prepared by the VA Internal Audit Service.

The senator released copies of a letter he wrote to VA Administrator Donald E. Johnson, asking for a report on what steps had been taken to correct the situation.

Proxmire said telephone conversations had been illegally recorded by the hospital director and assistant director without the knowledge of the other party.

He said recorded conversations involved central office program officials, Vanderbilt University staff, members of medical societies and officials of veterans organizations.

Proxmire said $4,000 in research funds had been used to build a luxurious office for the hospital's chief of staff.

The senator said that the hospital seems too preoccupied with the needs of its affiliated medical school. He said this works to the detriment of patients.

He said that Hugh E. Vickerstaff, director of the hospital, had "too great a concern" for the needs and desires of the medical school.

According to the draft audit report, the director's former association with the medical school could be affecting his objectivity regarding VA policies and requirements, Proxmire said.