

Widespread Wiretapping By Police in New Haven From '66 to '71 Reported

NEW HAVEN, Jan. 24 (AP)—Thousands of telephone conversations were monitored by the New Haven Police Department in apparently illegal wiretapping between 1966 and 1971. The New Haven Journal-Courier quoted sources today as reporting.

In a copyrighted article, the newspaper said the police had tapped the phones of more than 100 city residents every day from about 9 A.M. until the early hours the next day.

The Police Department could tap four different telephone lines simultaneously, sources with knowledge of the operation were quoted as saying.

The wiretapping operation began during the administration of former Mayor Richard Lee and continued into the administration of former Mayor Bartholomew Guida, The Journal-Courier said.

Mr. Lee inspected the wiretapping equipment in 1968 in a room owned by the New Haven Redevelopment Agency, one source was quoted as saying. The Journal-Courier said that Police Chief James Ahern of New Haven and his brother, Stephen Ahern, then a New Haven police inspector, had been with Mr. Lee during the inspection.

Independent sources said Stephen Ahern had been in charge of the wiretapping operation from its beginning in 1966 and had remained in command after his brother retired as chief in December 1970, and Biagio DiLieto became Police Chief in January 1971, the newspaper said.

Mr. Lee, Mr. DiLieto and James Ahern each denied knowledge of the operation, and Stephen Ahern, through his attorney, refused comment. The Journal-Courier said.

The sources said someone at the Southern New England Telephone Company had been paid to connect wires between the telephone tap and the tapping-room telephone.

A spokesman for the telephone company said it knew of no wiretap activity by the New Haven police.

"This is not a pie-in-the-sky plan dropped off by some outside so-called expert working only with cold facts and figures," said Mr. Manes. "This is a practical, realistic program, thought out, developed and evaluated by the people who know the area and the problems, and can best plan how to meet and conquer them—and that is the people who make up Flushing."