

Congress Wiretap Charge Is Denied

A New York wiretapping expert, Bernard Spindel, claimed—and the government denied yesterday — that the telephones of Congressmen in Washington have been “bugged” with equipment in a building near the Capitol.

Spindel, in testimony before a Massachusetts legislative commission, said the “master” telephone cables into congressional offices were monitored by a Government agency, perhaps the Justice Department.

Justice Department officials immediately denied the report: “There is absolutely no basis for the allegation.”

It was denied, too, by the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company. No such monitoring has taken place, the company said, although the Spindel story has been checked out twice—a year ago and again two months ago.

Another skeptic was Rep.

Cornelius Gallagher, (D-N.J.), chairman of the special subcommittee on invasion of privacy.

“I can’t believe any department of this Government would be involved in this activity,” Gallagher said. “I would like to see proof . . . It does, however, point up appalling possibilities . . . and the need for a new look at the legal problems of sophisticated eavesdropping.”

The apparent basis for Spindel’s sensational charge is the fact that lines from the cable serving the Capitol branch off into the Esso Building at 261 Constitution ave. The Justice Department rents the sixth floor of that building for data processing by the Bureau of Prisons.

But the telephone company said the service to the Esso building is telephone service, pure and simple.