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Where's Hale Boggs' proof that FBI bugged his phone?



Curtis, Milwaukee Sentinel

Washington — Nearly a month ago, Democratic House Leader Hale Boggs cut loose with a series of charges that the FBI tapped telephones of congressmen, including his, and had studied records of long distance phone calls charged to his office and that of former House Speaker John W. McCormack.

Boggs' month of high-flown rhetoric included the charge that the FBI used "the tactics of the Soviet Union and Hitler's Gestapo," and he called for J. Edgar Hoover's resignation.

Then, like a host of burly football players, a squad of other Democrats "piled on" the smitten agency and the downed Mr. Hoover.

Toll Records

Presidential aspirants Ed Muskie, George McGovern and Harold Hughes jumped on and so did lesser congressional figures. Suddenly, everybody claimed his phone was being tapped.

Old J. Edgar hasn't caught so much hell in years.

The questions of reforming the FBI and Hoover's future are too big for discussion here. But I must say that Boggs hasn't proved a damned thing, and that Muskie and Hughes are blowing hot air.

It's true that the Justice Department, in investigating McCormack's aide, Martin Sweig, and Nathan M. Voloshen, convicted later of perjury and bribery, obtained records of toll calls made from McCormack's office.

It's also true that toll records of calls from Boggs' home were obtained in the same way in connection with an investigation of Baltimore contractor Victor J. Frenkil whose performance in constructing a huge garage for congressmen here brought complaints of cost overruns.

There was an additional complaint that Boggs, who interceded for Frenkil, had his house remodeled by Frenkil for about half the normal cost. This

investigation apparently caused Boggs to feel uneasy because last summer he asked the telephone company to check his phone lines at home to determine whether they were tapped. He complained of clicking sounds on the line.

The phone company thoroughly checked Boggs' lines and phones, told him there were no taps and informed Boggs that the clicking sounds came from his Swedish-made "Arika" phone.

Wire tap experts state that persons cannot tell, when using their phones, if the line is tapped. The phone company's explanation did not satisfy Boggs.

House speech

What is really bugging Boggs is a matter for speculation. Earlier this year, he had a floor fight off the House floor, and in the men's room of a hotel.

A Nixon supporter decked him with a right to the jaw during an argument.

The House leader is a distressed man, so much so that he leaked a story two weeks ago the New York Times (which should know better) that he was going to prove all his charges in a House speech. That speech, delivered April 22, proved nothing.

He grabbed at the case of Texas congressman John Dowdy, accused of perjury and of accepting \$25,000 in return for seeking to stop a federal prosecution of home remodelers in Washington, to prove FBI wire tapping of a congressman's phone. In truth, a tape recorder was placed on a U.S. attorney's phone in Baltimore to record a conversation between Dowdy and Nathan H. Cohen, a co-conspirator turned informer, for purposes of getting criminal evidence.

This action, and other recordings of Dowdy-Cohen conversations were legally obtained through court order. No tap was ever put on Dowdy's phone.