

RFK Role in Bugging Cases Shown

By Drew Pearson and
Jack Anderson

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy has denied that when Attorney General he authorized the wiretapping or bugging of Dr. Martin Luther King, or on any other of the FBI's eavesdropping activity.

In a conversation with the authors of this column last January, he denied that he knew anything about the FBI's eavesdropping. In referring to the bugging of lobbyist Fred Black's room in the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel he said that he had not known about it until he read it in the newspapers.

Kennedy also denied having anything to do with the investigation of Bobby Baker, the ex-Senate Secretary who may have been investigated for the purpose of linking him with the then Vice President, Lyndon Johnson. Baker and Fred Black were intimate friends, and President Johnson has been convinced that Kennedy launched the Black probe as a means of knocking LBJ off his brother's 1964 ticket. Kennedy, however, denied this.

"If I had ordered an investigation of Bobby Baker," he told us, "someone would have written a memorandum to that effect; and there is no such memo."

It is not pleasant to be in the position of challenging the word of a member of the Kennedy family. In all deference to the former Attorney Gen-

eral, however, there exist some important memos in the Justice Department which show conclusively that he did have knowledge of eavesdropping and that he authorized part of it.

One memo was written on July 16, 1963, after Kennedy had requested a wiretap be placed on the phone of Dr. Martin Luther King. The memo explained how the FBI had persuaded Kennedy to change his mind—for the time being.

Bugging Fred Black

Another is a written notation on an FBI report on the bugging of Fred Black's room in the Carlton Hotel. This eavesdropping was recorded in various memos in which FBI agents gave details on extensive conversations pertaining to the political affairs of Sen. Mike Monroney and Rep. Carl Albert of Oklahoma, Rep. Gerald Ford of Michigan, the legislative operations of President Johnson in getting bills through Congress, and the placing of North American Aviation and General Dynamics defense plants in certain congressional districts in order to help friendly Congressmen.

Perhaps the most significant document involving Attorney General Kennedy in eavesdropping, however, was an FBI memo dated July 7, 1961, which reviewed the FBI's eavesdropping policy. This policy was to use bugging or

"electronic devices" for crime investigation and wiretaps for national security cases, in other words listening in on foreign agents and potential spies. Kennedy was represented as "pleased" over the way the FBI was carrying on electronic eavesdropping.

The memo may explain why Bobby Kennedy has been so confident that no eavesdrop memos with his name signed to them exist in the Justice Department today. For he expressed the wish that the records be returned to the FBI and kept under "the special security conditions which only the FBI had."

Significant Memo

The memo is signed by FBI liaison man Courtney Evans. Addressed to Alan H. Belmont, assistant director of the FBI, the memo reads:

"In line with the director's approval, the Attorney General was contacted this morning, July 7, 1961, relative to his observation as to the possibility of utilizing 'electronic devices' in organized crime investigations.

"It was pointed out to the Attorney General that we had taken action with regard to the use of microphone surveillances in these cases and, while they represented an expensive investigative step, we were nevertheless utilizing them in all instances where this was technically feasible

and where valuable information might be expected. The strong objections to the utilization of telephone taps as contrasted to microphone surveillances was stressed. The Attorney General stated he recognized the reasons why telephone taps should be restricted to national-defense-type cases and he was pleased we had been using microphone surveillances where these objections do not apply wherever possible in organized crime matters.

"The Attorney General noted that he had approved several technical surveillances in connection with security-type investigations since he took office, but that he had not kept any record and didn't really know what he had approved and what surveillances were currently in operation. He said that for his own information he would like to see a list of the technical surveillances now in operation. He added that this could be brought over to him personally and that he would look it over and immediately return it because he realized the importance of having these records maintained under the special security conditions which only the FBI had.

"If the director approves, we will have the list of technical surveillances prepared, delivered personally to the Attorney General and then returned to the Bureau's file."