

Merry-Go-Round *Feb. 7 1966*

A Most Embarrassing Suit Against the FBI



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THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT is pinning its hopes on Judge John Mowbry, Nevada jurist, to kill one of the most embarrassing law suits brought in the history of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The suit, filed by the Fremont Hotel and Edward Levinson of Las Vegas, shows that the FBI had 25 wire taps in this and other Las Vegas hotels, in violation of the laws of the State of Nevada.

As a result, the Fremont Hotel and Levinson are suing the Central Telephone Co. and four FBI agents for a total of \$6 million.

The suit, if it goes to trial, will involve J. Edgar Hoover and former Attorney General Robert Kennedy, both of whom are now passing the buck to the other for responsibility in getting the FBI mixed up in such wholesale wire tapping.

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THE TELEPHONE company has already approached the Justice Department with a view to dumping the whole thing on its doorstep. At first telephone officials tried to cover up their part in the tapping, but got so involved in giving alibis that they finally made a clean breast and admitted that they had cooperated in wire tapping at the request of the FBI.

Telephone officials have further informed the Justice Department that they do not plan to be hooked for the \$6 million, and it was up to the FBI and Justice to take the rap.

All this is why the Justice Department is maneuvering to quash the law suit.

First word of the wire taps came when Senator Howard Cannon (Dem-Nev.) called on President Johnson early in 1964 to tell him that FBI wire taps had been discovered in several Las Vegas hotels, which was a crime under Nevada law.

It was found, among other things, that the FBI had four hotel rooms in which it picked up conversations from electronic devices all over the Las Vegas Strip, recorded them on machines, then transcribed the conversations.

President Johnson called in Kennedy, then serving as Attorney General, who agreed to remove the taps.

Later Senator Cannon went back to President Johnson with pictures of what the FBI had been doing and informed him that despite Attorney General Kennedy's previous promise, the FBI was still eavesdropping.

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THE WIRE TAPPING started when Attorney General Kennedy launched his anticrime drive and wanted to check on underworld characters in Las Vegas.

There is considerable difference of opinion backstage in the Justice Department as to whether J. Edgar Hoover or Kennedy were responsible for this wide-scale wire tapping. Friends of Hoover assert he demurred, pin the blame on Bobby. But friends of Bobby deny this.

The Justice Department claims the statute of limitations has run and is so arguing before Judge Mowbry next week.

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