

President's group owes bug bill here

By Ronald Koziol

THE COMMITTEE to Re-Elect the President still owes several thousand dollars to a Chicago electronics expert who reportedly prepared at least two of the eavesdropping devices used to phone-tap conversations from the Democrats' Watergate headquarters in Washington.

The devices were purchased from Michael Stevens, who at one time operated Stevens Research Lab, 2050 W. Devon Av., by James McCord, one of the convicted Watergate conspirators.

But whether Stevens ever submitted a bill directly to the committee is not known.

A spokesman for the committee said yesterday that all purchases made by McCord

while he was security chief for the committee were billed thru McCord Associates, a Rockville, Md., firm operated by McCord.

"IF WE HAD been aware that McCord purchased equipment for illegal surveillance, the bills certainly would not have been approved," said the spokesman.

However, a source close to McCord said the former CIA agent contends that he was working for the committee when he made the electronic purchases and that any outstanding bills should be paid by the committee.

McCord, on one of two trips to Chicago early last year, reportedly had ordered at least six bugging devices from Stevens. Only two were picked up

by McCord and at least four other devices reportedly were still in Stevens' possession at the time of the Watergate break-in, June 17.

It also was learned that McCord had purchased a total of 11 transmitter type devices in Chicago, New York, and Washington. In all cases, the purchases were made thru McCord Associates, which in turn would bill the re-election committee.

STEVENS' DEVON Avenue electronics store abruptly closed in January, shortly after McCord began cooperating with Justice Department and Senate investigators. Stevens reportedly left Chicago.

McCord's attorney, Bernard Fensterwald, denied reports that his client identified himself as a member of the Central Intelligence Agency in

purchasing the equipment from Stevens. He said McCord may have used an assumed name, however.

Records of the Committee to Re-Elect the President show that McCord was reimbursed for thousands of dollars worth of electronic equipment purchased early last year.

Among the purchases listed are hundreds of dollars worth of tapes and specially constructed locks. Most of these purchases were made in the Washington, D. C., area.

Several of the suppliers interviewed by The Tribune refused to discuss the sales to McCord. One supplier said, "The reason people deal with me is because whatever work I do is held in strictest confidence."