



Gravest of Charges On Watergate Tapes

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THE GRAVEST charges have now been convincingly made against Judge John J. Sirica's panel of experts on the Watergate tapes. They have been accused of tampering with vital evidence. They have also been accused of quite possible gross error.

If the charges stand up, the President and his staff are guiltless just where they have been found most guilty, in the matter of doctoring the tapes. This is startling enough. But what makes the charges far more startling is their source.

The source is "Science." This magazine is the weekly organ of much of the American scientific community.

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THE "Science" article, written by Nicholas Wade, concerns the ultra-famous Watergate tape with the 18½-minute gap filled only by a buzz. Judge Sirica's experts found that the gap was unquestionably made by purposeful erasure of the tape. This was said to be proven by electronic stop/start "signatures" numbering at least five, and perhaps as many as nine.

To make their study, the five experts, chaired by Richard H. Bolt, were given the Uher 5000 tape recorder used by the President's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, plus the original of the tape with the 18½-minute gap. The whole strange plot revolves around the fact that the Uher 5000 recorder was defective, to the point of breaking down in the hands of the five experts.

When this happened, the evidence-

tampering occurred — no doubt innocently yet quite unchallengeably. By their own admission, the experts "opened up the interior" of the machine, replaced a diode bridge and tightened screws and probably ground connections as well. In other words, the Uher 5000, a most material piece of evidence, was physically altered in a most material way.

It may therefore be impossible, hereafter, to test the machine's possible malfunctions before it came into the hands of the panel of experts. With a view to such tests, however, Judge Sirica has already been asked for the defective diode bridge that was replaced, plus the exact record of the other changes made in the Uher 5000 by the expert panel. No answer has as yet been forthcoming. It even appears possible that no record was kept by the experts and the defective diode bridge was simply thrown away!

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THIS IS ALL vitally important, in turn, because of a peculiar characteristic of the Uher 5000 recorder. A voltage drop resulting from malfunction can just as easily produce the stop/start signatures found by the expert panel as can a purposeful effort to erase the tape.

Incredibly enough, by their own admission in court, the expert panel tested this question of erasure by malfunction on a Sony recorder instead of on the Uher 5000. The Sony does not have the Uher's peculiar characteristic above noted. Thus the possibility of erasure of the tape by malfunction was dismissed after a phony test in a shockingly slipshod way.