

# Johnson Had Missing Tapes, Too

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and Les Whitten**

A packet of taped material embarrassing to the late President Lyndon Johnson was removed from government files at his request and sent to him at the White House, according to sources close to the case.

As with President Nixon's disappearing tapes and his irretrievable segments of recordings, however, there is suspicion that the missing data on Johnson was more than a simple case of untidy housekeeping.

The taped material concerning LBJ, our sources told us, was generated while the FBI was illegally eavesdropping on the Sheraton-Carlton hotel suite of Washington lobbyist Fred Black. Under court order, logs of this pre-1964 bugging were turned over to Black.

As we have reported earlier, they contain references to now Vice President Gerald R. Ford, House Speaker Carl Albert, former Senate Majority Secretary Bobby Baker and many others.

But missing from the files returned to Black were any tapes or full transcriptions of tapes. Even the logs themselves show gaps of days when no sounds came from the luxurious suite which Black obligingly provided to his friends and clients.

Notably, there is virtually nothing critical about Johnson

or his activities in the tapes from that wheeling-dealing era. If Johnson retained the material given to him, that would explain some of the gaps, including the absence of any Johnsoniana.

Whatever the solution to the mystery, the Justice Department is under a new court order to turn over to Black almost all records surrounding the illegal eavesdropping. So far, Justice has refused, claiming "executive privilege," a claim rejected by federal Judge Charles Richey.

While one source speculates that Johnson returned the data to the files, where they were honestly misplaced, another source believes the material never came back from the White House.

The quandary may never be resolved. One of the few men with total access to the files was the late J. Edgar Hoover. The man who allegedly received them, Hoover's close friend Lyndon Johnson, is also dead.

Footnote: A Justice Department official connected with the Black case for six years said he had no knowledge of missing documents or any Black data ever sent to President Johnson.

Two of President Johnson's associates in the '60s also told us they knew nothing of the removal.

**Simon Says:** Energy boss William Simon's temper has worn thin recently, often with good justification. When Simon decided to lower fuel allocations in 10 states, the hapless bureaucrat responsible for informing the governors forget to tell them.

The state executives learned on the evening news they were losing their gasoline and angrily lit up Simon's switchboard. Simon, in turn, blasted the erring aide and nearly fired him, Federal Energy Office sources told us.

At about the same time, while Simon was at the vortex of the truckers' strike negotiations in Washington, a touring aide contradicted him publicly. Learning of it, Simon gave him the dressing down of his life.

Meanwhile, Simon aides had managed to snafu the FEO phone system. In a rush to find means of handling complaint calls, one aide had 16 new phones put in. But someone decided the number for the phone should not be issued because there was no one to man the phones, so now they sit idle.

Before Simon took off for a brief rest, he was working 18 hours a day. Many of his aides worked with him, with the result that they are often demoralized simply from overwork.

**Retirement Rip-Off:** Oregon Gov. Tom McCall has a reputa-

tion for good government which has stirred talk that he could be the Republican vice presidential nominee. But his opponents, with some justice, say he must first overcome the stigma of his planned \$14,000-a-year personal raid on the state treasury.

The Oregon legislature, with support from McCall's office, awarded governors reaching age 62 a pension equalling 45 per cent of their annual salary at the time they leave office.

McCall could collect \$70,000 by age 67 and \$210,000 by age 77 under the plan, with a contribution of less than \$7,500 of his own money. The taxpayers would make up the sizable difference. Outraged citizens learned of the plan, put the McCall money scheme to a vote and repealed the law by nearly two-to-one.

But the crafty 60-year-old McCall contends the \$169.17 per month he has been paying in the pension fund gives him a vested right in the pension that cannot be denied him even by repeal of the law. Oregon's attorney general agrees.

McCall told us that the voters' rejection of his pension was directed only at former governors who have not paid into the plan. But he says he will abide by any final court decision.