



Our Man Hoppe

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Who's Bugging The Democrats?



Arthur Hoppe

NEVER has there been a more gross miscarriage of injustice! I refer to the totally false and misleading charges that the GOP National Committee retained five fumble - finger spies to bug the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee.

True, the five, headed by a former CIA agent who was hired by the GOP after he helped plan the Bay of Pigs disaster, were allegedly caught red - handed with electronic devices in hand.

From this, some erroneously deduced the five were planting bugs in Democratic National Chairman Larry O'Brien's office. Nonsense. The truth is they were removing them.

Actually, the bugs were first installed three months ago by one Homer T. Pettibone, a former CIA agent credited with being the first to predict in 1957 that the Vietnam war would be over in a week.

Each Friday, Pettibone would report directly to a pipe-smoking higher - up identified only as "John N. Mitchell." As anyone familiar with the goings-on at the Democratic National Committee these days could have predicted, the inevitable occurred last Friday.

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SCENE: The luxurious offices of a wealthy and widely respected political party. Pettibone, coat collar turned up, hat brim snapped down, scuttles in, a tape recorder cradled in his arms.

Pettibone (elatedly): Our perseverance has finally paid off, Chief. I've got a whole bundle of secrets here. Do you realize the Democrats are \$9 million in debt?

Mitchell: That's all they've talked about for the past three months.

Pettibone: And O'Brien likes pastrami-on-rye sandwiches.

Mitchell: That's all he ever talks about. As a simple humanitarian gesture, I've been thinking of sending him one. What about your telephone taps?

Pettibone: Sorry, Chief. The phone company removed them. Along with their telephones. But I did manage to listen in on a secret reading of the entire Democratic platform.

Mitchell: Now you're talking! What does it say?

Pettibone (reading from a transcript): "The Democratic Party," according to what O'Brien told an unidentified source, "stands for building a better America." Should we leak that to the press?

Mitchell (sighing): What we want to know is who their candidate's going to be. Did you pick up any conversation on that?

Pettibone: Yes, sir, 97 hours worth. It's definitely going to be McGovern, unless the Convention deadlocks. Then it's going to be either Humphrey, Kennedy, Wallace or E. Z. Lone.

Mitchell (perking up): Sounds like a dark horse. Who's E. Z. Lone?

Pettibone: I don't know, Chief. But O'Brien said several times that, and I quote, "The Party owes a great debt to The E. Z. Lone Company." Let's see if I've anything else . . . Oh, would you be interested in a list of their campaign contributors?

Mitchell (rubbing his hands excitedly): Now, that's what we've been waiting for, some political dynamite. Read it to me.

Pettibone: Right, Chief. (Reading) Herman F. Mudge of Peoria Falls, \$10.

Mitchell: Yes, yes, go on!

Pettibone: That's all, sir. That and the eviction notice.

Mitchell (blanching): Eviction notice! Look here, Pettibone, hire somebody to sneak in there and remove those bugs. We can't afford to have a new tenant find them and make the tapes public.

Pettibone: But if the Democrats have no secrets . . .

Mitchell (worriedly): The one thing we can't afford to buck, Pettibone, is a big sympathy vote.