

Bugging Called

Bungled Job

SFChronicle

JUN 19 1972

Washington

Wiretapping experts described the attempted bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters as one of the most unprofessional and bungled jobs they had ever heard of.

Based on descriptions of the bugging equipment confiscated by police and the methods used by the five intruders arrested early Saturday morning, these experts, many with years of bugging and debugging experience, called the job a Mack Sennett comedy, a Mickey Mouse operation and a blot on the bugging profession.

"This is fantastic," said one wiretapper. "That kind of (bugging) equipment went out with high-button shoes. These guys have got to be circus bums," he said.

PROS

The surreptitious and strictly illegal art of bugging and wiretapping is normally carried out by trained professionals who spend much of their time developing new and more sophisticated ways of snooping on other people's conversations. These professionals — usually current or former government employees, private detectives or electronics experts — sometimes work for industrial saboteurs, the Mafia and other criminal clients. They can point to years of planting bugging devices in hotels and homes without ever getting caught.

GEAR

It is to these professionals that a political party, or faction within a party, would normally turn for bugging services. The bugging experts interviewed yesterday said it has not been uncommon in elections past for this to occur, either before or after the party nomination, and they said it is particularly common for one candidate to bug another of the same party.

Police officially declined to describe the devices found at Democratic headquarters but one police electronics expert, who said he had examined the equipment, said it included at least one transmitter consisting of a three-inch-by-five-inch printed circuit board carrying a transistor, a resistor, and several capacitors, as well as 6½-volt flashlight batteries wired in nine volts of energy.

In addition, the police source said, a number of microphone devices the size of half dollars and equipped with suction cups were found.

Wiretap experts interviewed yesterday faulted the job at almost every point.

"In the first place," said one of the experts, "can you imagine hiring guys from Miami? You'd get local, top talent to do the job right. If I were going into a strange town, I'd employ only local guys. They know the field, they have the contacts."

AMAZEMENT

Michael J. Morrissey, chief engineer of a Holmes, N.Y., company that makes bugging devices for police agencies and trains police in their use, was incredulous when told five men had been arrested in connection with the job.

"If they follow the usual route, they hire only one man who doesn't know whom he's working for. This is the most amateurish job I ever saw," he said.

Other experts said taping doors so they wouldn't lock — and then re-taping one of them after the tape had been removed by a security guard — could only happen in a Keystone Kops comedy.

As for the equipment found at Democratic headquarters, one expert said microphones the size of half dollars, suction cups, and transmitters of the size described all went out in the 1950s.

Washington Post Service