NO States-Item

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President

DREW PEARSON

Sensational Side To Black 'Bugging

WASHINGTON-By all odds the most sensational eavesdropping case in the history of Washington was that conducted by the FBF two blocks from the White House in the Shera-ton Carlton Hotel suite of lobbyist Fred Black. interesting wiretapping cases,

its

on.

important:

office safe.

highly placed politicians, and

agents were most

trained when they recorded, for instance, that a Senate

"official"-not a senator-"en-

gaged in activity with fe-male" in the Black suite.

It also picked up some

ped the investigation like a

hot potato when such big names were mentioned. For

politics is nothing the FBI has any business listening in

Parenthetically, this might give the present President of

the United States a lesson in

the dangers of wiretapping at

give Congress the green light

despite the opposition of his

attorney general. TWO FACTS stand out re-

garding the FBI wiretapping

of Black's apartment as all-

President Johnson that Bobby

Kennedy personally ordered the bugging.

dy ordered the FBI to make

Baker, even assigned some

of his own personal Justice Department investigators to

go after Baker, as if he did not trust the FBI. Finally, he kept a secret copy of the

Baker findings in his own

Since Baker as Senate sec-

retary had long worked for

Johnson as Senate majority leader, such a probe must have been aimed at the then

vice-president. As it turned out, Baker's wheeling and

2-Attorney General Kenne-

thorough probe of Bobby

1-The FBI has confided to

on a new wiretapping law-

to

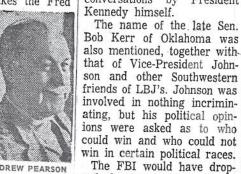
a time when he is about

conversations by

There have been other such as that conducted by the late Sen. Owen Brewster, R-Maine, on behalf of Pan American Airways in the hotel suite of Howard Hughes, then owner of Trans World Airways. And there has been recent bugging by rival natural gas pipeline companies.

But what makes the Fred

Black bugging sensational is first, the fact that it was adjacent to the VIP suite used by the State Department to entertain distin-guished foreign visitors, and the FBI's DREW



DREW PEARSON CCS WERE SO electronic devices strong that they couldn't help listening in on these visitors also.

Second, and more important, there was some indication that the attorney general who ordered the bugging, namely, Robert F. Kennedy, was interested in the activities of the then Vice-President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson.

OFFICIALLY, the FBI was supposed to be investigating possible links between Black and Las Vegas gamblers. Certainly the FBI was not prob-ing Black's income taxes. This was Internal Revenue's job and it finally convicted him -a conviction thrown out of court when Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach and Deputy Attorney General Ramsay Clark forced the FBI to admit it had been listening in on Black and others on a whole-

sale scale for some years. J. Edgar Hoover succeeded in getting Katzenbach eased out of the Justice Department in retaliation, and is now in the process of trying to put the skids under Ramsay Clark

Regarding the Black elec-tronic bug, however, the FBI is smart. It doesn't like to is smart: get mixed up in spying on left the Senate, and the late Sen. Kerr, not Johnson, was involved as Baker's mentor and benefactor.

dealing started after Johnson

Despite this, stories were leaked to the press-though never proved-that LBJ was involved.

All this was the beginning of the Bobby Kennedy-John-son feud. It has smoldered deep, will never be smothered.

On Johnson's biggest dayhis inaugural on Jan. 20, 1965, following his landslide triumph over Barry Goldwater-Kennedy made a show of visiting his brother's grave in Arlington. He arrived at the graveside in the morning, but because no photographers were around he came back again in the afternoon.

There could be no mistaking the message of the pic-ture, which marred LBJ's inauguration. It was Kennedy's way of reminding the world who should have been president.

SUBSEQUENTLY, Kennedy has let it be known that he is ready to step into his brother's place if only Johnson will step aside. The hint was put most bluntly by Kennedy-intimate Ted Sorenson, who pointed out that three other vice-presidents who had ascended to the presidency in this century had not run for a second term.

"If Mr. Johnson of his own accord choses to retire," said Sorensen, "No one can call that a retreat from the historical pattern when it would in reality be fidelity to it."

But President Johnson has no intention of abdicating to clear the way for Bobby Kennedy. If he should decide to retire from the White House, he would use his influence at the Democratic convention to block Kennedy's nomination, in favor of Hubert Humphrey

Furthermore Johnson is a man who believes in gratitude and he remembers how in Bobby Kennedy's only bid for public office he was elected to the Senate from New York in 1964 by a 719,693 margin after he, LBJ, cam-paigned up and down the state for him. Johnson's majority was 2,669,597.