

## Wiretapping Dr. King

To the Editor:

On page 27 of your June 5 issue is a report of testimony by an F.B.I. agent that Martin Luther King's telephone had been tapped for a number of years before his death. I may be naive, but I was shocked by the disclosure of continuing electronic surveillance of one of the country's greatest and most respected leaders. Entirely apart from the patent illegality of this wiretapping, it is deeply disturbing that someone like Dr. King, who himself could have been thought "subversive" only by the most fertile imaginings of bigoted minds, was subjected to systematic invasions of his privacy.

What reasons could there have been for this continued wiretapping? Do the same reasons apply to all controversial public figures? Who authorized this surveillance? It is still unclear, to my knowledge, whether Attorneys General Kennedy and Katzenbach gave such authorization. Ramsey Clark has said that no electronic surveillance of Dr. King was authorized during his term as Attorney General, and has called "outrageous" any implication that persons in the Department of Justice thought that Dr. King was a national security risk. If so, does the F.B.I. engage in such systematic incursions on its own initiative?

Should the surveillance prove to be, in fact, as outrageous as it appears on the limited information we now have, are there any institutional safeguards in the Justice Department to see that similar cases do not recur? If the public is to retain even a modicum of confidence in the willingness of the F.B.I. and the Justice Department to be responsive to the most elemental civil liberties, someone needs to provide an answer to these questions.

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