

Senate Committee Considers Legalization Of State Wiretapping

AUSTIN, Tex. (AP) — The federal government's top wiretap lawyer told the Texas Senate committee Tuesday that defendants always plead guilty when faced with wiretap evidence.

"The cases never go to trial," said John Bartels of the Justice Department. Since the accused cannot deny an admission in his own voice, he pleads guilty, Bartels said.

In three years, Bartels got authorization for 58 wiretaps, which

he said led the nation.

Bartels testified before the Senate Jurisprudence Committee in support of a bill by Sen. D. H. Harris, R-Dallas, that would legalize state wiretapping.

The bill was referred to a subcommittee after a three-hour hearing that included many unfriendly questions by members of the committee.

The committee also heard and approved a bill by Sen. Oscar Mauzy, D-Dallas, that would al-

low a plaintiff's percentage of negligence to be subtracted from the defendant's in accident suits.

Under present law, if a jury finds a plaintiff even 1 per cent negligent, he gets nothing.

The legislature approved Mauzy's comparative negligence bill two years ago, but Gov. Preston Smith vetoed it.

The bill now goes to the Senate floor for debate.

Harris' bill would permit a prosecutor to go to a state dis-

trict court judge and get permission to tap a wire—or conduct any other kind of electronic surveillance—upon a showing that a major crime has been, is being or is likely to be committed.

Unauthorized wiretapping could be punished by a \$5,000 fine and a 5-year prison term. The victim of an illegal wiretap could file a civil suit for up to \$1,000, plus punitive damages and court costs.

Russell Ormesher, Dallas assistant district attorney, said the bill

was needed because: "We're trying and convicting the dummy, so to speak. We're not reaching the top."

Sen. Jack Ogg, D-Houston, pressed Ormesher on what safeguards there were to prevent a prosecutor from saying: "This is a bad guy, and, Judge, if you'll give us this, we'll bring you back some evidence if you'll just give us enough time."

Ormesher said the prosecutor and the judge were elected offi-

cial, and he talked of other features of the bill, but he ended up answering Ogg's question by saying: "I think the district judges can be trusted."

The bill also would allow a prosecutor's assistant to authorize a wiretap in "emergency" situations involving organized crime. A judge would have to approve the action within 48 hours.

Sen. Charles Herring, D-Austin, chairman of the committee, said he did not like the assistant idea.

"I want the man himself (the district attorney). I want him to go to the pen for five years for a violation," Herring said.

Mike Hinton, Houston assistant district attorney, said: "We need this bill very badly."

Hinton works fulltime on organized crime. "Houston, for instance, is wide open," he said. "... They are coming. Indeed, I can tell you they are already there."

Sam Houston Clinton, an Austin lawyer representing the Texas Civil Liberties Union, spoke against the bill.

"This bill moves us one step closer to 1984," Clinton said. "This is a wide open, pervading, permissive electronic surveillance bill."

U. S. Dollar Devaluation Explained

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The dollar has been devalued. What does it really mean to the average American? Here are some questions and answers:

Q. What is devaluation?

A. The dollar devaluation announced Monday means a dollar can be exchanged for 10 per cent less currency of a foreign country. If you go to Germany and ask for change of a dollar, you will get, roughly, 2.9 marks instead of 3.2.

If you buy a Volkswagen there or here, it will cost you more dollars even if the car's price in marks is the same.

Q. Does it affect American goods I buy in the United States?

A. No. An American car or an American soft drink will cost the same as before.

Q. Why was the dollar devalued?

A. The United States lately has run up major trade deficits by importing much more than it exported. This created a large supply of dollars held abroad. Investors abroad began to worry about the value of these dollars because of American inflation.

Q. What will devaluation do?

A. The hope is that by making foreign imports more expensive in the United States and U.S. exports cheaper abroad, it will bring the U.S. trade deficit back into balance. It will make foreign travel more costly, foreign imports more expensive. But it might increase employment at home by opening up foreign markets.

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