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'Cheesebox,' Remote Control Phone Device, Leads to Raid on Bookmaking Headquarters

The \$100-a-week clerk for a canny bookmaker operating a \$5,000-a-day business with a remote-control device known as a "cheesebox" was arrested yesterday by plainclothes patrolmen led by Assistant Chief Inspector James R. Kennedy, head of the Police Commissioner's confidential squad. The prisoner, David R. Wassing, 30 years old, of 2425 Mermaid Avenue, Brooklyn, was seized in a well-furnished studio apartment at 259 West Eighty-fifth Street as he dialed the telephone number that enabled him to make connection with the ingenious device set up in a vacant apartment about two and a half miles away, at 239 East Thirty-seventh Street.

After arresting Wassing, a prosperous-looking six-footer, the plainclothes men took over the telephone and in less than an hour reported that they had "booked" \$200 in wagers. Most of the bets, the police said, were "lay-offs," indicating that the boss of the operation was high in gambling circles.

Wassing, according to Inspector Kennedy, would not disclose the identity of his employer, professed to have no knowledge of the loca-

tion of the "cheesebox" and insisted that he was a mere hireling, with no previous record of arrests. He was booked on a charge of bookmaking. Later he was paroled in the custody of his attorney.

The inspector's men took betting slips, charts and racing data from the apartment and also confiscated two radios and an electric clock, complete with timer, used, they said, for recording the exact minutes bets became official.

The "cheesebox," a device rarely used today, allows a bookmaker to operate with a high degree of safety from being traced. It operates through a relay hooked up to two telephones in the vacant apartment. When the number of the first phone is dialed a tripper transfers the call to the second telephone. To complete the transaction the bet recorder must dial the second number and pick up the conversation.

To avoid having a telephone "trouble shooter" come onto the line the bookie or his man must call at three-minute intervals.

Inspector Kennedy would not say how long the device had been in operation.