***By Jan Schultz***
***The Imperial Republican***

Imperial police continue to investigate a series of break-ins at local businesses in late January.

One man is in custody in the Chase County Jail related to the crimes, and was scheduled for a preliminary hearing Wednesday of this week.

Chief Larry Browning was summoned to T.O. Haas Tire on Highway 61 shortly after 7 a.m. Friday morning, Jan. 23. Within the same hour, the police were contacted by two other businesses also reporting break-ins.

At T.O. Haas, Browning said persons gained entry into the shop area sometime after the business closed the day before. The break-in was discovered when employees came to work that Friday morning.

Chief Browning said evidence indicated the burglars walked through the building, but nothing was taken.

About 15 to 20 minutes later, Browning received a call from Frenchman Valley Coop., also reporting a break-in at the company's tire storage building. Again, nothing was taken but the perpetrators had been inside and damage was done to the building to gain entry.

While at the coop., Browning was contacted again about another break-in at the coop's wholesale plant on East Highway 6 (formerly Blick's).

He summoned Sgt. Rob Browning, who went to that scene. As with the other two businesses, persons gained entry but nothing was taken.

The theft of tires appears to be the motive for the break-ins, Chief Browning said. It is unclear at this time why nothing was removed, but an Imperial police officer was on patrol that evening and may have been in those areas.

Blake Burnside, age 20, of Rensselaer, Ind., is in jail here, charged with the three burglaries, two felony charges of criminal mischief and a misdemeanor criminal mischief charge. In addition, County Attorney Arlan Wine has charged him with burglary tool possession, also a felony.

He is being held on a $100,000 bond and must post 10 percent to be released.

Burnside was actually arrested in Ogallala on Jan. 24, as he attempted to break into a T.O. Haas Tire store in that community.

However, two employees were still inside the store as he attempted to gain entry, and was arrested after officers were called, Chief Browning said.

Burnside was transferred to Chase County because the charges here are more serious, according to officers.

Damages to the three buildings in the break-ins here have totaled $4,400, according to Wine.

**Two other businesses hit**

January has been a busy month for business break-ins in Imperial, said Chief Browning.

Two other Imperial businesses reported break-ins earlier in the month, which are not related to the three reported Jan. 23.

Imperial Country Ford on East 5th St. and Highway 61 was broken into and an estimated $22 in cash was taken from an employee snack box. Entry was gained through a window the burglar broke in the shop area.

Marietta Kuhn also reported a break-in at her beauty shop building on West 3rd St. Nothing was taken, but the door was damaged as the burglars gained entry.

Those two incidents remain under investigation, as well.