

Packard pushes public privacy

by Ric Darichuk

Vance Packard was the guest speaker at the Forum last Wednesday, March 5, in Dinwoodie. An accomplished author of such works as *The Naked Society*, *The Status Seekers*, and *The Hidden Persuaders*, he declared Edmonton as 'one of the more dramatic cities' he has visited. The author of THREE successive Number One Bestsellers began his topic, Invasion of Our Privacy, to an attentive (but meager) audience of 150.

Packard was quite concerned with the enormous growth of methods and persons involved in 'people-watching', primarily for control and surveillance purposes.

At the present, he states, there are millions of North Americans under lie-detector tests, personnel checks, and hidden recordings of conversations, all justified in the name of orderliness and efficiency. He feels they are a massive impeachment on our private lives, and the 'Concept of Privacy', which states the right to be alone is most comprehensive and most valued by civilized man.

Packard believes our technology motivates people to keep track of others; whether under surveillance or not, he feels there is always the apprehension of being watched.

Vance Packard used numerous, and often colorful, examples to depict the lack of privacy we endure. Reference to recent decisions in the United States clearly shows how near they have come to being a police state. Proposals made in

government to allow 'legal' wire-tapping and opening of private mail both are contradictory and in opposition to the U.S. Constitution and our Bill of Rights. An astounding example was that of the White House

information as leverage to receive his demands.

There has been recent discussions on affixing transmitters to parolees, malcontents, and aliens so their whereabouts would always be

known. Possible advancements may permit these transmitters to 'read' a persons condition, therefore their actions (possibly by adrenalin flow or respiratory rate).

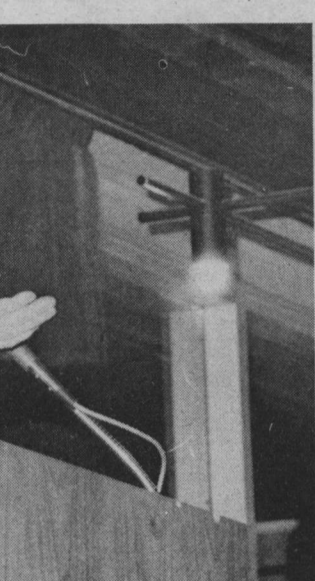


Photo- Rick Fritze

using confidential Internal Revenue Listings to 'get at their enemies'. These 'enemies' were primarily members of 'Activist Organizations', but the basic definition could refer to anyone they desired.

Recent discoveries of files kept by J. Edgar Hoover have had a terrifying effect. (The F.B.I. being the nearest thing to a secret police the U.S. has). In his personal safe, 48 dossiers of derogatory information were found, primarily on Congressmen and persons in positions of power. Packard stated that Hoover had not hesitated to implement this

when we will all be coded with identity numbers, thereby preventing imitations, but also restricting us. His feelings towards this are summarized in three words: "Shades of Russia".

"In all this pushing and pulling, the individual is losing," states Packard. Presently there are transmitters that can be fired from a gun, either onto windows or near persons conversing. He also showed concern about the development of a laser beam capable of listening at 100 yards. He says at the present there are thousands of hotel rooms equipped for surveillance. When a person registers, they are steered to one of these rooms to be watched.

A ridiculous example Vance Packard used was that of a corporation which occupied ten floors of a building. In each of the women's washrooms, transmitters had been planted in the toilet paper dispensers. (Beware of your mumblings when squatting and reading graffiti!)

Packard further explained there are advocates of a 'Central

Memory Bank'. This centralized system would contain all personal information in one computer. The reasoning for this is 'statistical purposes', but he feels the computer could be transformed into a giant dossier bank used for intimidation.

Packard feels personal information eventually damages a person through out-dated material or false impressions. If such files must be kept, he states 'all citizens should see their files in order that errors may be corrected' and that the file be of a short term basis.

If governments would ban shipping of eavesdropping equipment to private organizations, thereby preventing further degeneration of employee-employer trust, it may possibly aid in alleviating the problem.

Vance Packard hits on matters of public concern, as his book sales have proved. Privacy is a right, yet it is constantly infringed upon. If dollars become associated with the privacy of the individual, take stock of the privacy you now enjoy; the future is not promising to the individual.



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Entry Deadline: March 14