

# There are strange things done 'neath the midnight suns ....



Taping for M.E.T.A.

**B** York students aren't happy with the way television techniques are being used at this university.

Most of us have heard of the setup used in Modes 171. The lecture is given live in lecture hall E, and the greenboard is used for examples and explanations. In various other halls in the building the lecture is shown on two small monitors, or on a large rear-screen projection at the front of the class.

Here's what some people taking the course this year think of this method of instruction:

● Jane Atkinson, Founders II: I don't mind, if everyone in the room keeps quiet. The techniques of production are OK. But I prefer the live lectures. I think most people do.

● Sharon Walters, Vanier I: Not too good. Hard to see writing on the board. Hard to keep attentive with such a small screen.

● Sue Whiting, Founders I: I always go to the live lecture, because the big screen isn't very clear.

● Luba Myslivec, Vanier II: The large screen picture is fuzzy, and you can't read the writing. The students are noisy. The prof. stationed in the hall is ignored.

People who took the course last year were more concerned about relating to the teacher:

● Lylianne Burston, Vanier II: It was horrible! Bad, boring — no rapport between the student and teacher. The large screen picture was quite clear, but the small monitors were unsatisfactory.

● Linda Honey, Winters II: I enjoyed it because it was on TV and there weren't as many people in the class, making it easier to relate to the professor. You could talk without being afraid of interrupting. Also, in Soc. Sci. 104 the instructor taught using a television program he had made and that was effective . . . it

was more creative.

● Shayne Tracy, Vanier II: Impersonal! Doesn't reach you! People go hoping the lecture will be interesting and when it isn't they disrupt the class or leave. They hadn't perfected the screening techniques. The lens didn't have wide enough range; one couldn't read the figures — they weren't sharp.

● David Rowan, Winters I: I think one advantage of the TV class is that you can discuss the ideas without fear of repercussion while the lecture is in progress.

● Leslie Gondor, Founders I: If all the lectures were pretaped, and if there were just one lecture a week, there would be more seminars.

The consensus then, is that more personal instruction is needed, and that if television is to be used it must be perfected technically and be of superior quality than at present.

**A** If you want to know that something's really all about, to whom do you turn? Naturally, to someone who knows what makes a tic, and might even videotape it.

To unscramble this cryptic, and learn the psychologists' point of view on educational television, keep perusing.

by David Schatzky

Dr. Dov Friedlander, Assistant Professor of Psychology here at York, and Director of Psychological Services' Tension Control and Behaviour Modification (affectionately known as Habit Remodelling) Divisions, has emerged in a new career, that of TV producer.

This status entitles him to speak expertly on the role of television in the university. His experience at Scarborough College demonstrated to him that many people find television classes impersonal. But he feels the atmosphere in which we are forced to watch television teaching determines our attitude towards it. As a Social Science lecturer at Glendon he has observed small groups of 15 people with conventional sized monitors enjoying this experience. However, large collections of students in big lecture halls need large screens to become engrossed in the lesson.

Our conditioning in society also influences our ability to appreciate TV classes. We are used to keeping quiet in movie houses, but not in front of the television at home. The TV generation (which we are) is

used to watching TV purely for entertainment, and often accompanies this activity with eating and drinking. Because of this, says Dr. Friedlander, many people find the Modes 171 TV class a homey place to eat lunch.

He had advice for all those lecturers who use television in their courses, especially those who merely use television as an extension of themselves. These people must be educated in TV techniques, using them, especially emphasizing the visual impact of the medium which, he implied, they largely now ignore.

Dr. Friedlander himself felt that he would like to experiment by using a number of screens with different related material being shown constantly while he was lecturing. This would be effective because a listener can remain attentive only 30% of the time. While his mind is wandering, he might as well be stimulated by something related to the lecture, instead of daydreaming. An example of this might be a lecture on child development during which the multi-screen features excerpts from the Gesell Institute children films. This film material would illustrate exactly what the lecturer was talking about, but would be close enough to have some educational value.

Dr. Friedlander, Assistant Professor of Psychology, demonstrated that the Psychology Department is probably the most creative and efficient user of contemporary audio-visual facilities on campus. He himself has written and appeared in a

programme on TENSION, currently being used by Psychological Services to give people requesting aid a better insight into their problem. This method, Dr. Friedlander feels, is merely another teaching technique; however, it is a technique which allows more people to get the personal attention they may need more efficiently. Before the onset of videotape, it was necessary for each counsellor to query each student individually about his symptoms. However, with this programme the student can evaluate or diagnose his problem correctly himself. Thus much time is saved. This fits in perfectly with the philosophy of the Psychological Services Department whose aim is not only to aid the emotionally crippled few, but to help as many people as possible operate at peak efficiency, and to supply the facilities for making this possible: the majority of which are teaching devices, working on the self-help system.

This is not as impersonal as it sounds. There is always a preliminary interview with a counsellor, and after the viewing of the programme, there's at least one more meeting.

The Psychological Services Division has now two 1/2" General Electric Videotape machines and has many uses for them. They own and buy tapes from private organisations and other universities on relevant material. These are seen both by classes and individuals, and because the machines are portable, there is great flexibility in their

use. Videotape can be used as an assessment technique device for recording changes in behaviour. An extreme example of this, Dr. Friedlander indicated, might be a student with a e/vous tic. Videotape would help him become aware of his affliction, and his progress in combating it could be recorded.

This, however, brings up the problem of ethics. Tapes would necessarily have to be confidential, and the anonymity of the subject would have to be preserved. More important videotape (or any like device) could never be used without the student's consent.

Television too, is helpful in psychotherapy. If a patient and the doctor can watch just-completed sessions, they both gain a tremendous insight into the relationship between them, and this can start helpful feedback from the patient as he becomes more self-aware.

Counsellors in training are also exposed to (and on) videotape. Their first attempts at Counselling can be taped, exposing them to their faults, which subsequently they could attempt to erase (the faults, not the videotape).

In talking with Dr. Friedlander I had the impression that he felt very much at home with modern audio-visual technology and that he sees it as an important aid both in the furthering of education, and in its many therapeutic applications. Let's hope that York University as a whole soon echoes his creative approach!



Taping for M.E.T.A., a York Communications project.

by Anita Levine

**D** Are the mass media manipulating our minds?

Thelma McCormack, a special lecturer in communications for the sociology department, doesn't think so.

She says the talk about the media sorming our opinions and manipulating us in sinister little ways is part of our attempt to find a scapegoat for the ills presently troubling our society — a paranoid reaction.

"The evidence from most studies is that media don't change most opinions but tend to reinforce them, because we expose ourselves collectively," says Mrs. McCormack.

"Social change is much too complex a process to be controlled by the media."

But shouldn't the media be trying to change things?

Mrs. McCormack isn't sure. She wonders whether it really is the job of the media to try to convert people. In any case, they don't do it very well. Her example, a favorite one, was the Chicago convention coverage. "So the media tell you and show you that violence on the part of the police is bad, but if they don't show you that it is part of a larger problem, you don't really get anywhere."

The reason for this problem, she

says, is that traditional journalism dies hard. "The old rule of journalism said that what's news is dramatic. People want simple, stereotyped explanations. No one really wants to know about background."

This is why Mrs. McCormack laments the lack of in-depth coverage supplied by the mass media. She sees the media's function as one of making people aware of their similarities and differences, aware of their past as a society — to provide what psychologists call a gestalt.

"In a society which is made complex through high social differentiation, the media have a big job to do in bridging the communications gap, so that students can understand professors, laymen can understand what doctors are talking about, and the worker can understand what his union boss is talking about."

So far, the media seems to be blowing the job, says Mrs. McCormack.

Inevitably, the discussion turns to the electronic media, and naturally, McLuhan.

Mrs. McCormack has written several articles about the guru of pop. Essentially, she doesn't dig him. In fact, she thinks he's dangerous.

"In mass society the greatest problem is alienation, caused by things like the fragmentation of experience, anonymity of cities, division of labor. The modern dream is to have a sense of community."

"McLuhan promises this. He says the electronic media will restore this Global Village. That's a fantasy. A dangerous illusion. You can't tell people in a complex society that they can return to this pre-technological idea of community. They can't."

"McLuhan talks about the electronic media as involving. He says print belongs to detachment, objectivity — the scientific attitude."

"He calls television a cool medium. The kind of involvement you bring to it is projection. All you see in it is what you put into it. It's a participation in a mass movement. You read into it what you want. But what it leads to is a sense of isolation, not a sense of community."

She pointed out the danger. "The sense of participation you get with cool media — not only TV but abstract art, for instance — is not a communitizing experience, but a privatizing experience."

In promising Communities, McLuhan is promising us the unattainable, and therein lies the danger to

society. Instead of uniting us, television ultimately reinforces our sense of separateness, of isolation from each other.

Mrs. McCormack also insists that McLuhan's discovery of the media is not original. She sees him as an ideologue rather than a new media man. "The notion that audiences are not passive may be new to members of the Home & School who think their kids are blotters soaking up violence but media researchers have known this for a long time."

I asked her why the pop philosopher has been so well received, to the extent of an invitation to Fordham University where he spent the last year.

"I don't know, exactly. There's a real cult surrounding him — disciples caught up in the kind of anti-rationalism he represents — creative people, in the arts, not the sciences. The ones I've met are fascinating people. Lots of film-makers. And he has a way of putting scholars on the spot . . ."

I wondered how he would respond to her criticism of his views.

"He'd say, you haven't grasped it, you haven't understood it." Thelma McCormack smiled. "But I think I have."



Arthur Knowles, Director of the Department of Instructional Aid Resources is interviewed by Larry Ankiewicz.

by Larry Ankiewicz

**C** student television productions? Lectures telecast throughout the entire York campus? Films and video tapes imported from around the world?

All this and much more is indeed possible. At present, York University is one of the leaders in Canada in the use of audio-visual aids in the educational process, but Arthur Knowles, Director of the Department of Instructional Aid Resources, believes that much more can be done in the future.

Modern technology should be used to improve the learning process, says Knowles. "You can't rely on the limited relationship between professor and student for learning."

For that reason York has set

up its own Instructional Aid Resources department. In this way, the modern communications media — television, films, slides, audio tapes, long playing records, etc. — can be used to enhance and improve the "old, encrusted methods" of education.

One of the new techniques being introduced this year is the use of one-inch portable video tape recorders. These machines can be used to record experiments, and then play them back to the students. They can also be used by the Physical Education department to tape a football play. The tape can then be played back in slow motion and the players can see their own errors on the instant replay.

But probably the best known aspect of the Instructional Aid Resources department is closed circuit television in lecture hall

1. Mr. Knowles is well aware of the discontent among many students with this set-up, but he points out that there is little that can be done about it at the moment. The Modes class is just too large and there are not enough teachers available to supply an instructor in each lecture hall. Therefore, television is used to allow all the students to see and hear the lecture.

Mr. Knowles does concede that there is room for improvement in the present set-up and he and his department are working on the problems. Better equipment is now being used to telecast the lectures and new ways are being sought to improve the audio portion of the broadcast, especially to pick up questions from the student audience. He cited a case he observed at a recent conference in Poland. In that country, the television network carried a course in metallurgy. It was shown five nights a week and had a registered student enrolment of 50,000.

Mr. Knowles says he'd like to see a more direct involvement of the student body, possibly with periodic television programs to promote student activities. These programs could be shown on video tape machines set up throughout the colleges. Student debates and visiting lecturers could also be taped or telecast live.

Knowles pointed out that several Glendon students are now working on a television production of Moliere. The students are providing the actors, as well as working on the graphics, lighting and other elements of the production.

These are only a few of the possibilities of York's TV department. However, Art Knowles emphasizes that it is the students who must take the initiative.



In the Control Console are David Homer, Fred Thornhill, and Ken Kline.



Left, Bob Ross, David Stringer, Don Campbell working at televisual graphic art.