

Pro-Privacy Ad Campaign

The Big Eye in Albuquerque

By Carroll W. Cagle
Special to The Washington Post

ALBUQUERQUE, March 31—For the past month, the 400,000 residents of the Albuquerque metropolitan area have been the subject of a saturation media campaign calculated to jolt them into awareness that someone may be looking over their shoulders.

It apparently is working.

Before the campaign began, a survey conducted by a University of New Mexico pollster found that 87 per cent of respondents felt their privacy was threatened only slightly or "not much at all." Only 23 per cent thought government action was needed to limit incursions into their privacy.

Then, again, a media blitz calculated, as one organizer put it, to make Albuquerqueans "wonder what in the hell was going on."

Billboards, filled border to border with a single, unnerving human eye, sprang up along heavily traveled commuter routes. The same eye, one column by one inch in size, peered out from a dozen spots in each day's editions of the two Albuquerque daily newspapers.

Other billboards showed computer cards with key-hole-shaped holes in them and "1984 and Counting?" across the top.

Bizarre, 30-second and one-minute spots started cropping up with great frequency on prime-time television.

One spot opens in color with school children happily playing "Red Rover" in a grassy glade. One little girl runs toward the camera, in slow motion. Closer, closer, until suddenly the action freezes, the color changes to black and white and the girl stares blankly forward in a prisoner-like pose, a Social Security number across her

stantial turnaround in public awareness and opinion.

The 87 per cent figure of relatively unconcerned respondents dropped to 55 per cent, and the 14 per cent who felt their privacy was threatened "very much" jumped to 44 per cent, a 300 per cent increase. The percentage believing government remedial action was necessary increased from 23 to 52 per cent.

The media campaign was adopted by the NMCLU after being created (and the media materials prepared at a cost of \$25,000) by the Institute for Regional Education, a Santa Fe-based public interest center run by self-styled "alternative culture" types.

"We didn't want to just reach the true believers," said one institute official. "We wanted to reach the av-

erage citizens, and raise their level of consciousness. We knew we couldn't rely on public service programming or we'd be relegated to Sunday mornings at 7 a.m., so we decided to approach the media in a very conventional way—with money."

Steve Golden, another official, added: "It's an issue which everyone has to be for. It transcends social, economic and partisan lines."

chest.

The New Mexico Civil Liberties Union, sponsor of the media project, spent \$50,000 during the one month in the relatively small Albuquerque market—enough to achieve truly "saturation coverage."

A post-campaign poll, even including a 4.5 per cent error rate, indicated a sub-

