

U.S. Rejects 'Big Brother' Radio Linkup

By Stephen Green
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A governmental study group appointed by the White House science office has come up with a proposal to put special FM radio receivers in every American home to permit the government to communicate directly with citizens 24 hours a day.

This proposal—one of many contained in a 300-page report entitled "Communication for Social Needs"—was turned down, according to Dr. Edward E. David Jr., director of the White House Office of Science and Technology.

The White House released David's statement after existence of the study was disclosed by Rep. William S. Moorhead (D-Pa.), chairman of the House Government Information Subcommittee.

Moorhead called the proposal a "blueprint for the Big Brother Propaganda and spy system which George Orwell warned about in his novel, '1984'."

Dated August, 1971 the document is stamped "Administratively Confidential" on every page. It states it was prepared at David's request for presidential assistant John D. Ehrlichman, chairman of the White House Domestic Council.

"The Domestic Council receives dozens of suggestions and ideas every month from inside and outside the government," David said. "Some are good and some are terrible."

"This particular proposal was rejected outright by the Office of Science and Technology over a year ago. It was never even submitted to the Domestic Council for review."

"Had the Congressman asked, we would gladly have informed him of the facts. But I guess he was more interested in a headline than the facts."

According to OST spokesman John Lannan, the science office requested representatives of federal agencies to prepare recommendations on how new technological developments could meet social needs of the country.

One of the answers the group came up with was the proposed government FM receivers, which could be turned on by the government even though citizens try to turn them off.

Under the proposal, manufacturers would be required to install the FM receivers in every boat, automobile, radio and television set. "The system," the document says, "must be operated 24 hours per day" to cover "100 per cent of the population" and even "wake those asleep" for disaster warnings.

In addition to the special FM radio system, the plan calls for an expanded Public Broadcasting System that would educate children to become good world citizens.

It also proposes a "wired city" and ultimately a "wired nation" system that would have information about police

and court records, as well as individual health records, in a common computerized file system.

Information from the common file would flow back and forth between Washington and every area of the country. The "wired nation" also would receive, from Washington, cultural programs and popular entertainment on radio and television.

Implementation of the FM system could begin by 1975, the document states, with an initial cost of \$230 million and an additional cost of \$200 million a year for the receiver sets.

According to the proposal, the communications system could solve the problems of urban areas where there is "growing social unrest" and an "apparent social malaise."

One way this could be done, the document says, is to "provide the public with a better understanding of the functions of the criminal justice system" and transmit "confirmation or denial of rumors." Local governments would be assigned their own FM channels.

The document acknowledges that there may be "some concern about invasion of privacy."

"There may be opposition to requiring receivers built into all radios and televisions," it says.

The objective of the children's programs, the document says, is to "educate preschool children for world citizenship."

"The federal role in moral ethical training may be controversial," the proposal says. It adds that there is "a need for General Parent Education" that government programs could provide.

Also proposed are:

- Televising court proceedings and using taped testimony as evidence in trials.

- An electronic mail handling system in which letters would be scanned electronically and their contents sent to the city of destination through a computer system.

- Launching of three new communications satellites to handle messages sent over the new system.

White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler said yesterday he knew nothing about the report, adding: "I'm sure this administration will not propose or proceed with a program such as that."