

physical and social amenities. Studies indicate that the best readers come from homes that have lots of appliances and lots of rooms, but not necessarily lots of books.

From this the logical, but erroneous, conclusion might be drawn that if we should simply fill up the homes of non-readers with dish washers and turn on the hot water, the children would necessarily be turned on to print. This might help, but it would not solve the problem. Middle-class culture is as much a symptom of achievement as a reason for it. One appliance, however, that is specifically useful is television. Today, the right to read implies the right to watch TV. As Dr. Sava points out, television stimulates reading and "supplies conceptual background or comprehension and extends interests." But this gives rise to paradox. Although television may improve reading skills, it conditions the child to an electronic mode of communication so that the immediate benefit to books may prove to be a long-term loss.

Moreover, as the poverty child grows older, his limited access to books may choke off an interest in reading. Ghetto libraries are not always geared to ghetto needs. (To the poor, a library can be just another forbidding, middle-class institution.) The very act of teaching "literacy" can discourage a desire to read. Professor Philip Ennis, of Wesleyan University, points out that "The pressure to read for practical purposes can be so heavy and . . . onerous due to the training of 'how to read a page' in school that the use of print for other motives can be endangered."

It was with this in mind that the National Book Committee, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities combined forces to set up a Books Exposure project in Fall River, Massachusetts, three years ago. Carried out in five "culturally disadvantaged" elementary schools, this experiment in motivation emphasized reading at home as well as at school, and for pleasure rather than achievement.

Fall River proved to be a good choice; as a decaying textile city, it exhibited in microcosm most of the educational problems that attend the economic and social ills of the large metropolis. The school drop-out rate was high (33 per cent in high school, an even higher percentage in junior high) and 25 per cent of the school population was foreign-born, chiefly Portuguese. By and large, the children came from non-reading backgrounds. Previous efforts to improve their reading skills had been "costly and generally ineffective."

The research design in this project consisted of fifteen experimental and

fifteen control classrooms, at levels one through five. Some seven volunteers were recruited of them local adults. In the mental groups, reading sessions held once a week, during school hours. Children were allowed to take books home, and they were given four books a year, of their own choice, as gifts. They also wrote their own poems, book reports, and stories. Emphasis was on "surrounding children with stimulating adults who encourage them to read, . . . share their excitement about books, and give them books of their own to keep."

The control groups, by comparison, were supplied with books, which the students were allowed to borrow, but there were no volunteers, no reading sessions, no writing projects, and no gift books. The results, when measured against the experimental units, were dramatically lower in the development of "reading attitudes," although both groups showed improvement over previous performance. In sum, continued exposure to books created a desire to read for pleasure, and when this was reinforced by group reading, adult stimulation, and book ownership, the children for the first time tended to prefer reading to many other forms of activity, and to "become increasingly careful in their choices."

Books Exposure is now moving on for tryouts in Boston and Minneapolis. Among older children, similar success in turning non-readers into readers has been achieved in "crash programs" such as that carried out in the nearly all-black Marshall High School on Chicago's South Side. A few years ago, Principal Henry Springs set up educa-

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by Peter Schrag

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the students come in," Springs told a conference organized by the National Book Committee. "The students run the bookshop, and they sell the books [primarily black-oriented] as fast as we can purchase them. . . . Some of the youngsters can't read these books, but they carry them around all the time." It is not just a matter of chance that more than 50 per cent of Marshall graduates now go on to college.

The National Reading Council hopes to enlist ten million volunteer tutors by 1976 to work with children who need help. A network of training centers will be set up across the country, model tutorial programs are to be conducted in various cities, and a public relations campaign will recruit volunteers and sell the idea to local communities, with the necessary funding to come from the Office of Education and other federal agencies.

"Tutoring breaks down the unproductive teacher-class relationship and, by definition, sets up a high productive arrangement of one-to-one where concern is paramount," the council declares. In tests to date, the most effective tutors have proved to be older children. "It has been shown that such programs upgrade the reading skills of not only the pupil but the tutor as well," the council adds.

Well and good, but where do we go from here? Fortunately, public libraries are beginning to take up the challenge of the ghetto in "outreach" programs directed at non-borrowers and (in many cases) non-readers. This is sometimes done by setting up neighborhood, or storefront, centers manned by community personnel. The Brooklyn Public Library's "3 Bs" project places small collections of paperbound books in bars, beauty salons, and barber shops. A few cities run free bus service for children in the district to get them into the library. The New Haven center ties in books with handicraft, art, music, and language clubs for young people. In some libraries, phonograph records provide background music for reading sessions, as well as excitement for the rock-happy young.

All of these programs have two things in common: They direct their primary efforts at poverty areas, and, hopefully, they extend the idea of literacy beyond the merely functional. Ultimately, for the millions of marginally literate in this country, reading must become its own reward. The right to read means more than knowing how to fill out a form.

Gift

by Reeve Spencer Kelley

I give you an ounce of blood
dressed as a sparrow

not necessarily
in masquerade, mind you,

though it is possible
it could have come
as a chickadee

but there it is
in a blood-proof skin
plus down and none-too-solid feather

a momentary sea
on dry land, in fatal red
and furious need of seed,
constant to the winging
of its shores

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Dossier Dictatorship

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This week SR focuses on the invasion of privacy. The lead article by Ralph Nader (page 18) discusses the use of the dossier by credit bureaus and other private organizations, while former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, in his review of Arthur R. Miller's *The Assault on Privacy* (page 29), assesses the impact of a rampant computer technology devoted to the gathering of information on private citizens. In the following editorial, editor-at-large Peter Schrag deals with the growing use of surveillance by governmental agencies.*

It does not take a long memory to recall the days when that segment of the Orwellian universe that dealt with government surveillance of private citizens and the collection of "dossiers" was largely the concern of fiction writers, students of Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, and a small number of others who were generally regarded as paranoids. There had been reports as early as 1966 or 1967 that the police had infiltrated the peace and civil rights movements, that the FBI was tapping Martin Luther King's telephone (among others), and that anti-war demonstrators were being carefully photographed by intelligence agents, but most of those reports were dismissed as exaggerations. If they cared at all, most Americans were certain that their government had neither the resources nor the guile to go into the snooping business in any large way.

We now know that we were wrong,

that during the last generation (and most precipitously in the past three or four years) agencies of the government have created an extensive apparatus for the collection, storage, and exchange of what we once regarded as privileged information about the most intimate details of our private lives. The revelations of former intelligence agents (military and civilian) and the extended hearings last month of the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights have made it entirely clear that the paranoia of 1960 has become the fact of 1971. The Justice Department (particularly the FBI), the Internal Revenue Service, the Passport Division of the State Department, the Social Security Administration, the military, state, and local police, the welfare agencies, the motor vehicles bureaus, and other bureaucracies maintain dossiers on millions of Americans.

The information in those dossiers—many of them now computerized—is often required to carry on the legitimate and necessary functions of the agency that maintains them; but a substantial and growing part, as we learned from the hearings, is also accessible to other people and organizations, public and private, for purposes—to put it mildly—far beyond propriety or Constitutional limits. Sometimes the information leaks; sometimes it is exchanged between agencies; sometimes it is used deliberately to intimidate innocent people. Since it is now technologically possible for the government to link all its data banks through com-

puter terminals and compatible storage systems, the potential already exists for obtaining a master print-out in seconds of all the information—fact, rumor, innuendo—that has been compiled on a particular individual by a number of different agencies. So far, that capability has not been implemented; if it ever is, the government or any unscrupulous official will be able to intimidate or blackmail political enemies at will and to engage in the sort of totalitarian machinations that were once the fantasies of political science fiction.

Yet, even without a central data bank, information has been blatantly misused. Sometimes it is sold—legally or illegally—to private buyers; in some states, any salesman can buy lists of car registrants (with the type, model, and age of the car) from the motor vehicles bureau; elsewhere individual policemen have sold confidential police information to corporate employers interested in the background of prospects for executive positions; sometimes information is surreptitiously released by the police or the FBI to the press to embarrass an individual or organization. We know from the subcommittee hearings that material collected by government investigators about Mayor Joseph Alioto of San Francisco was leaked to writers of a magazine exposé; we also know that last fall military intelligence agents were engaged in the surveillance of political candidates in the state of Illinois, among them Adlai E. Stevenson III, now the state's junior Senator. At this moment there is little other than self-restraint to prevent such information from being furnished to politicians who are sympathetic to government snoops or who happen to enjoy the favor of those who employ the agents. More subtle, but equally frightening, is the general potential for intimidating any citizen engaged in unpopular causes or in whatever political activities happen to displease the government at the moment. The effect is contagious and crippling; most men who think they are being watched are likely to be more cautious in their political opinions no matter how innocent their record and behavior. They have no assurance, moreover, that their dossiers are not loaded with implications and inaccuracies; there is no way that they can see, correct, or answer the material.

On several occasions during the hearings, Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr., the subcommittee chairman, spoke of the "chilling effect" of government surveillance; what he could not know for certain at the time was that such surveillance has been used deliberately by agents of the government to intimidate dissenters. A few days after the hearings closed, several members of

lawyer with the New York Civil Liberties Union, "cannot survive in an atmosphere where all deviations from the norm are immediately noted by the state and stored for future reference." The existence of the file itself is chilling, even if it is never used.

The problem of controlling the processes of surveillance is compounded by elements all but endemic in contemporary society. Most Americans—from childhood on—have become so inured to the dossier that it now seems a normal part of existence, even an indispensable element of one's identity. To have no Social Security number, to confront an administrator who declares that "your file has been misplaced," or to transfer to a school that has no record of your previous existence in the system is to risk life as a non-person. Children learn from an early age that transgressions "will go on your permanent record" and that certain acts may be recorded without their knowledge or that of their parents; in many instances, they are denied any effective right to inspect their own files. And what begins in childhood is compounded in later years: welfare records, traffic records, credit records. We have been taught not only to accept our dossiers but to desire them.

At the same time, as one member of the subcommittee pointed out, "there is an extraordinary and relentless drive for more information." The self-actuating desire to collect and store data has a life of its own; each echelon collects more information than its mandate allows and disposes of less when (if ever) the order comes to destroy. Several high administration promises to have the Army dispose of its dossiers on private citizens are still awaiting fulfillment; in one case, originals were destroyed but tapes were kept; in another, the Army simply turned its material over to the FBI.

Members of Senator Ervin's subcommittee and other members of Congress are now struggling with the problems of control. Among the current proposals are bills that would give citizens the right to inspect their own files, make factual corrections, and deny derogatory statements. One such bill has been introduced by Representative Edward I. Koch of New York with the co-sponsorship of forty-five other members of the House. A similar bill has been introduced in the upper house by Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana. (Both bills permit the government to exclude cases and information affecting national security.) Other proposals to harass individuals but to stifle free speech in general. "The tone of spontaneity of spirit that characterizes a free society," said Burt Neuborne, a



Congress and a number of major news-papers received copies of material stolen from the files of an FBI office in Pennsylvania. The FBI acknowledged that the documents were authentic. Among them was a newsletter from the FBI's Philadelphia office urging agents to step up their interviews with members of the New Left because "it will enhance the paranoia endemic in these circles and will further serve to get the point across that there is an FBI agent behind every mailbox." In that context, the official opposition of the Justice Department to any legislative checks on surveillance crosses the line between zeal for law enforcement and a cynical, official desire to intimidate political dissent in America. The testimony of William H. Rehnquist, assistant attorney general (who appeared in place of Attorney General Mitchell), that "self-discipline" on the part of the Executive branch will be sufficient to eliminate most abuses in the surveillance machinery suggests something other than a passion to administer the criminal justice system without excessive Congressional interference; it suggests that some people in the administration understand the intimidating effect created by public awareness that some individuals are being watched, that their phones may be tapped, their movements followed, and their activities recorded.

The hearings of Senator Ervin's subcommittee covered a wide spectrum of information-gathering and data storage, public and private. Professor Arthur R. Miller of the University of Michigan Law School testified that the average American is the subject of ten to twenty dossiers in government and private files, and warned the subcommittee that the nation is heading for a "dossier dictatorship." He further said, "Each time a citizen files a tax return, applies for life insurance or credit card, seeks government benefits, or interviews for a job, a dossier is opened under his name and an informational profile on him is sketched." Most people are at least marginally aware of the problems created by computer misinformation in such relatively harmless areas as department store charge accounts, utility bills, and credit card bills will eventually affect their credit ratings and, on occasion, their chances for employment. But no private use of the dossier, however damaging to the individual, is as socially destructive as the existence of corresponding government files that may be used not only to harass individuals but to stifle free speech in general. "The tone of spontaneity of spirit that characterizes a free society," said Burt Neuborne, a