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Title           **Four arrested for calls outside normal lines**

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# 4 arrested for calls outside normal lines

By GARY TAYLOR  
Post Reporter

"Spiro Agnew" was in the Houston Police Station Sunday Night, accused of taking Ma Bell for a ride.

Spiro Agnew is the sophisticated code name, reportedly popular around Rice University, for two mechanical devices used to make and receive long distance calls from all over the world, illegally and without charge.

Telephone company security men refer to "Spiro Agnews" as blue and black boxes, said F. O. Bolton Jr., a security supervisor with Southwestern Bell Telephone Co.

Bolton demonstrated a Spiro and an Agnew Sunday night while burglary and theft detectives filed charges against four men, three Rice students, of obtaining telephone communications with intent to defraud, a misdemeanor.

The four were arrested about 6 p.m. Sunday in an office building in the 5400 block of Lawndale. They had just used a Spiro Agnew, the police said, to place calls to California, New Jersey and Argentina.

Det. E. P. Rivera said the group has been under investigation since October, when Ma Bell got on to them. Bolton would not say how they discovered the operation but he did predict more arrests and confirmed that similar operations, possibly re-

lated to the Houston outfit, are under investigation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Rivera said that during the investigation someone in the group made a call to Tokyo and talked for an hour.

James L. Latimer, 20, of 4109 Milam, described the motive behind the operation as "experimental."

A physics and electrical engineering student at Rice, Latimer spoke excitedly about wanting to improve systems of communications and of hooking into computer to make more basic information readily available.

"Before you can do that, you have to experiment," he said.

Latimer peered out from behind horn-rimmed glasses to explain that he does not hate the telephone company and that they never took into consideration whether or not they would get caught.

The possibility of hooking into the computers at MIT was discussed, Latimer explained. He outlined a complicated theory of circular computer systems with programs reproducing themselves, like "living things."

Latimer said the information needed to produce things like the "Spiro Agnews" is available easily in libraries.

The others, who were arrested, are Allen Frisbee of 403 Avondale, a computer designer who works for a con-

tractor at the Manned Spacecraft Center; James Greno, 21, and Charles David Covington, 18, both of whom live on the Rice campus.

Another Rice student arrested with the group was not charged. He said he had come to the building only to call his mother.

He added that he also made the call to Argentina because the group wanted to find out the codes needed to call South America, "The only place they said they hadn't called yet." He has friends in Argentina.

Bolton said 66 persons were arrested nationally last year for using "Spiro Agnews" but Sunday's Houston arrests were the first here.

He cautiously outlined how it works. The Spiro box cuts in on wats lines for calling anywhere while the Agnew box is used to receive calls.

The trick is in figuring out the codes, he said. The Spiro box confiscated Sunday was an old cigar box filled with buttons and wires.

The Agnew receiver operated with the flick of a switch. And either one, Bolton said, can be hooked up wherever there is a phone line.

Ma Bell, he said, is upset over the practice which is growing more popular.

The danger, Bolton said, lies if the underworld or spies get hold of these things.

"The possibilities are unlimited" he said.

*Both Jan & Herb  
sent this to the front  
to you - Are we to read between  
the lines?*