



Exploding The Phone

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Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title **Press Release on arrests by the Bell Telephone Co. in Pennsylvania**

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Abstract Kenneth Spacil, Robert Helms, Francis Mitchell, and Mrs. Helen Williams arrested for blue box fraud in PA. Bell PA president Cashel says the arrests are part of a nationwide crackdown. Four arrests made in the greater Philadelphia area, one in Tennessee, and another local suspect expected to be arrested today. Lots of great quotes.

Keywords Kenneth Spacil (arrested); Robert Helms (arrested); Francis Mitchell (long lines employee, arrested); Helen Williams (Mrs., toll operator, arrested); William S. Cashel (Bell president);

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PHILADELPHIA, PA., SEPTEMBER 28 -- THE BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY OF PENNSYLVANIA SAID TODAY IT PLANNED TO PUSH FOR "FULL PROSECUTION" OF SEVERAL SELF-STYLED "PHONE PHREAKS" ARRESTED MONDAY NIGHT AND CHARGED WITH MAKING THOUSANDS OF FREE CALLS ACROSS THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD WITH THE AID OF AN ILLEGAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE KNOWN AS A "BLUE BOX".

WILLIAM S. CASHEL, BELL PRESIDENT, SAID THE ARRESTS WERE PART OF A NATIONWIDE CRACKDOWN ON AN UNDERGROUND GROUP OF "PHREAKS" WHO, ON A DAILY BASIS, USE THE BLUE BOXES TO SEIZE HUNDREDS OF LONG DISTANCE CIRCUITS AND CHAT WITH EACH OTHER FOR AS LONG AS EIGHT AND TEN HOURS AT A STRETCH "JUST FOR KICKS".

FOUR ARRESTS WERE MADE IN THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA AND ONE IN TENNESSEE. ANOTHER SUSPECT IS EXPECTED TO BE PICKED UP BY LOCAL POLICE LATER TODAY.

CASHEL SAID 57 OTHER CASES WERE UNDER INVESTIGATION IN 14 STATES AND AT LEAST ONE FOREIGN COUNTRY.

"THESE PEOPLE MAY CONSIDER THEIR ACTIVITIES HARMLESS FUN AND GAMES, BUT THEY ARE INTERFERING -- IN A VERY SERIOUS AND DANGEROUS WAY -- WITH THE FACILITIES ESSENTIAL TO SERVING OUR PAYING CUSTOMERS," CASHEL SAID. "FURTHERMORE, THEY HAVE, ON OCCASION, INVADED THE PRIVACY OF TELEPHONE USERS AND IN THE COURSE OF THEIR OPERATIONS HAVE DEFRAUDED THE TELEPHONE COMPANY OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN REVENUE WHICH, INEVITABLY, MUST BE MADE UP BY OUR CUSTOMERS."

CASHEL POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS "CONCEIVABLE" THAT THE ILLEGAL INVASION OF THE NETWORK BY A GROUP OF "PHONE PHREAKS" COULD SHUT DOWN A CENTRAL OFFICE "AND DEPRIVE AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY OF SERVICE."

"OBVIOUSLY, WE CANNOT TOLERATE THIS KIND OF A THREAT TO THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE," HE SAID.

CASHEL SAID BELL HAD DEVELOPED THE ABILITY TO DETECT THE PRESENCE OF ILLEGAL TRAFFIC ON ITS NETWORK THROUGH THE USE OF COMPUTERS AND BY REGULAR MAINTENANCE CHECKS OF CENTRAL OFFICE EQUIPMENT.

HE SAID THAT ONCE THE COMPANY DISCOVERED AN INDIVIDUAL WAS MAKING ILLEGAL CALLS THE COMPANY COULD EASILY BUILD THE EVIDENCE NEEDED TO PROVE FRAUD OR OTHER CRIMINAL ACTIVITY.

"OUR METHODS ARE ALMOST FOOLPROOF AND GETTING BETTER," HE SAID.

CASHEL NOTED THAT THE BLUE BOX FAD WAS DOMINATED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY BRIGHT, YOUNG PEOPLE WHO -- ALONG WITH THEIR PARENTS IN MANY CASES -- IGNORED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THEIR ACTIVITIES.

HE SAID THE BLUE BOX HAD BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS, BUT ITS USE WAS NOT VERY WIDESPREAD UNTIL RECENTLY.

"IN THE PAST, A COLLEGE STUDENT HERE AND THERE WOULD DEVELOP ONE TO TEST HIS INGENUITY," HE SAID. "WE WOULD CATCH HIM AND LET HIM OFF RATHER LIGHTLY IF HE PROMISED NOT TO BUILD AND USE THIS DEVICE. IN THE PAST YEAR, OR TWO, HOWEVER, A RATHER LARGE GROUP OF BLUE BOXES WAS DEVELOPED AND THE USERS DESCENDED ON THE NETWORK IN A BIG WAY. WE THEN HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO START GETTING TOUGH ABOUT THE SITUATION."

CASHEL SAID THAT SO FAR THIS YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN 38 ARRESTS IN THE NATION, 18 CONVICTIONS AND 19 CASES ARE NOW PENDING. ONLY ONE CASE HAS BEEN DISMISSED.

"WE WILL CONTINUE TO MOVE AGGRESSIVELY AGAINST THE USE OF SUCH ILLICIT DEVICES," CASHEL SAID. "OBVIOUSLY, IF WE DID NOT, THESE DEVICES WOULD INEVITABLY BE WIDELY USED BY PROFESSIONAL CRIMINALS."

THE FRAUDULENT CALLS WERE DISCOVERED AUGUST 20 BY A BELL SWITCHMAN AS HE CHECKED THE EQUIPMENT IN BELL'S WEST CHESTER CENTRAL OFFICE FOR "ABNORMAL" CONDITIONS. FROM THEN UNTIL YESTERDAY, THE COMPANY LOGGED THE EVIDENCE NEEDED TO MAKE THE ARRESTS.

THOSE ARRESTED INCLUDED:

KENNETH M. SPACIL, R.D. 2, GLENMORE, PA.;
FRANCIS E. MITCHELL, 335 CONESTOGA ROAD, DEVON, PA.;
ROBERT HELMS, 205 CHESTNUT STREET, DOWNINGTON, PA.;
MRS. HELEN WILLIAMS, 1304 BURKE ROAD, WEST CHESTER, PA.

MITCHELL IS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE LONG LINES DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY AT WAYNE AND MRS. WILLIAMS IS A BELL TOLL TRAFFIC OPERATOR WHO WORKS IN BELL'S WEST CHESTER OFFICE.

THE LOCAL ARRESTS WERE MADE MONDAY EVENING IN SIMULTANEOUS RAIDS BY STATE, COUNTRY AND LOCAL POLICE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE CHIEF DETECTIVES AND THE DISTRICT ATTORNEYS OF BOTH CHESTER AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES.

THE SUSPECTS WERE ARRAIGNED BEFORE DISTRICT JUSTICE JOHN CATANISE IN COASTESVILLE. ALL WERE RELEASED ON BAIL RANGING FROM \$1,000 TO \$5,000 EACH. A HEARING HAS BEEN SCHEDULED OCTOBER 8.

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