

Phone phreaks rip off millions annually

The "little black box" described in last Wednesday's Emerald is not exactly Pacific Northwest Bell's favorite thing.

In fact, the box and other methods used to circumvent the phone company cost PNB \$17,000 dollars a month during the last six months. Nationwide, the Bell system lost \$22.2 million dollars due to phone fraud in 1971.

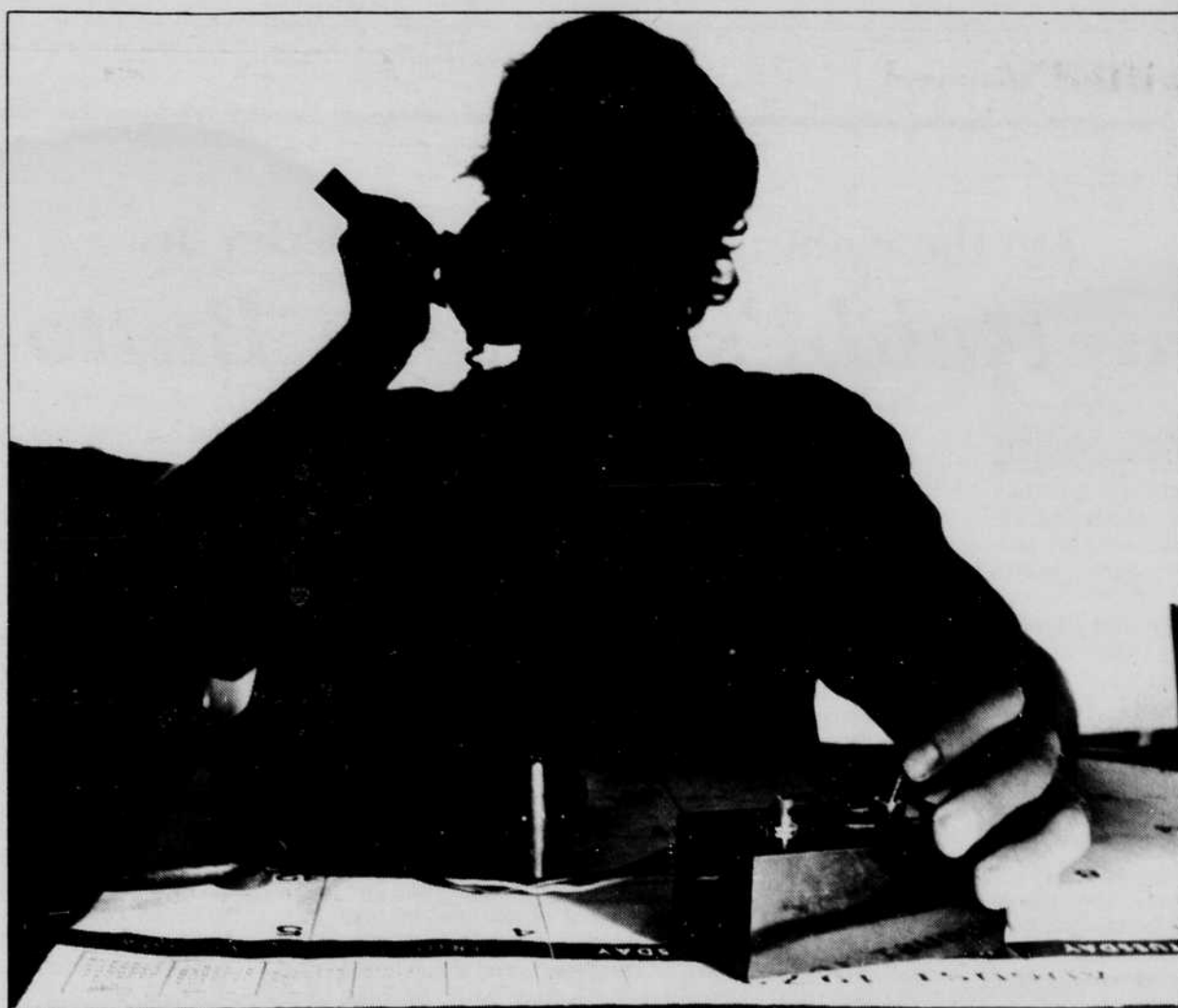
Ben Swank, general security manager of the Portland office of PNB said losses attributed directly to the black box are hard to estimate but "phone phreaks" have been arrested in Seattle, New York, Ohio, Montana and Pennsylvania during the last year. Two convictions have been obtained in Oregon.

Swank said the boxes are illegal. In fact, 27 states have made it illegal to "make or sell, offer for sale, loan or possess plans or instructions to make or assemble a device to be used for stealing telephone services."

Swank said this is how the hassle with Ramparts magazine got started.

California has a law making it illegal to publish information instructing others how to rip off telephone services. Swank said the editors of Ramparts were informed of this along with the magazine's distributors.

"Neither AT&T nor Pacific



When hooked up these devices cost phone company \$22 million. Photo by Phil Waldstein

Telephone confiscated magazines," Swank said, "but magazine distributors either did not circulate them or recalled them from magazine racks."

Oregon's laws concerning phone fraud are not so touchy. It is a misdemeanor to steal service or to make a fraudulent credit card call. Federal statutes apply also though, and a federal conviction can result in a penalty of five years in prison and/or a \$1,000 fine.

Swank said the use of the black box and the blue box which enables a person to break into toll free numbers for free long

distance calls, has been going on for about ten years. He said the use of the boxes has been picking up though and the phone company has been working harder to stop them.

Swank said that new computer equipment and training of employees helps detect phone fraud. "It is possible to detect when circuits are being used for abnormal lengths of time," he said.

But as things stand now, the phone company still has to deal with the simple little black boxes. There's no telling how many of them are around and no one can make an accurate estimate.



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ASUO program heads to ask senate for cutback procedure

By CAMERON STAUTH
Of the Emerald

ASUO Program Directors, still smarting from a fund cutback on one of their programs, will ask the ASUO Senate for a definite procedure on fund cutbacks when the Senate reconvenes this fall.

"The way it is now," said ASUO Chief administrative assistant Tim Travis, "the senate could take every penny from every program and there's not a thing that could be done about it."

The senate voted on July 30 to cut the funds of the ASUO Drug Information Center by almost half. "I think the cutback on the drug center was done out of personal animosity and not because of the worth of the program," said Travis, "and there is no check or balance now to keep this from happening again."

Despite heated protest from Mark Miller, director of the drug information program, the senate cut the program's budget from \$125 to \$80. Miller said this week that he is trying to get a federal grant and disaffiliate with the ASUO. "Our program is serving an important and real function and we just can't afford to have to deal with this type of mickey-mouse behavior," he said.

"The reason our program was singled out for a cutback of funds is because of a personal vendetta against me, and I think that is just ridiculous. We are one of the most active programs and have been very well organized," Miller said. "But if you incur the wrath of the senate, you're in trouble."

Miller will apply for a \$35,000 National Institute of Mental Health grant in September. He said he is reasonably optimistic about the chances of securing the grant. "There seems to be a lot of money available for drug programs," he said. "They are a big up and coming thing for the federal government."

The program directors are now in a "waiting stage," according to Travis, because the senate can take no action on the matter of fund cutback procedures until it begins meeting again in October.

The recommendations Travis has drawn up will probably go to the senate's governing committee. If the governing committee passes favorably on the proposal, it is likely to be passed by the entire senate.

The proposal includes:

—Seven days notice to the director of the program involved before any action is taken.

—A chance for the director to defend his program before the senate.

—A minimum of two-thirds majority of senators voting to pass budget cuts.

This proposal was introduced to the small summer senate in mid-August, but no action was taken on it. The proposal has been agreed to by the directors of 17 of the ASUO's more than 40 programs.

"The program directors are very upset over what happened to the drug information center," said Travis. "Senator Kent Anderson has said, 'This sets a precedent,' and that is exactly what worries us."

Travis said, though, that other senators, including senate president Cliff Zukin, do not seem to think that a strong precedent has been set. The Emerald was unable to reach Zukin, or any of the other senators.

Travis said he felt the senate tended to be jealous of its power over the programs and program directors, and has sometimes exercised its power capriciously. "The senate is notorious about being uninformed about what the various programs are doing, but they still like to exert their control over us," Travis said.

Travis said he thought it was "unlikely" that the senate would voluntarily vote to diminish their own power in the situation of fund cutbacks, but said, "You never know. There are going to be some new people in the fall senate."

"A compromise is fairly likely," Travis said. "I don't know that anybody is working on anything right now, but discussions about this matter will probably be starting sometime soon."

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