



SIGNS CARRY WARNING — Anti-Castro pickets march with placards at Times Square in New York City, carrying signs warning that Soviet troops are massed only 90 miles from the United States in Communist Cuba. The word "rescue" on the bottom of the sign means "rescue". The sign on the lamp post is a temporary one honoring American veterans. Premier Fidel Castro has charged that "armed ships" sprayed the Havana waterfront with gunfire last week. (UPI)

The Electronic Age

Press Agents Found In No Danger Of Being Replaced by Automation

By DICK WEST

Washington (UPI)—Press agents of the world, relax. It doesn't appear that you are in any immediate danger of being replaced by a robot.



I base this comforting statement on the experience I had with the automated information service that the Labor Department inaugurated this week on an experimental basis.

The department's venture into futuristic press agency employs a recording device that is hooked up to a telephone.

By dialing 9613388, a reporter theoretically can re-

ceive a recorded account of what's going on around the department. Note I said "theoretically."

I first dialed the number at 12:42 p.m. on the day that the robot in the grey flannel suit went into operation.

All I heard was a series of clicking noises, followed by the telephonic equivalent of the Bronx cheer. I identified it as a busy signal which for some reason sounded more raucous than usual.

The same thing happened the next two times I dialed. I naturally assumed that something pretty big must be going on to keep the line tied up like that.

Finally, on the fourth try, the dulcet tones of Bess Friedman, who had been assigned to give voice to the robot,

came undulating over the wire.

She talks a lot faster than I can take notes. A robot, however, does not respond to requests to slow down. I had to hang up, dial again and listen to repeats of the recording until I had copied the pertinent information.

"There will be a meeting this morning at 10 a.m. in room 3428 on the Huntsville, Ala., strike of electricians," it said.

The future tense sounded a bit odd for it was then 12:57 p.m.

I kept calling back during the afternoon hoping I would find out what happened at the meeting. But all I ever heard was "there will be a meeting this morning at 10 a.m., etc."

I was therefore forced to conclude that an electronic press agent doesn't give out stale news any better than the old fashion human variety.

Moreover, the robot variety has what I regard as a basic deficiency rendering it incapable of performing one of the fundamental functions of press agency.

Not being on an expense account, it is unable to buy a reporter an occasional drink.

Three Persons Are Indicted by Jury

A Jackson county grand jury returned three indictments on bad check charges Tuesday, according to the district attorney's office.

T. E. Pierce, 51, Reno, Nev., was indicted on charges of uttering and publishing a false check. The charge concerns passing a \$35 check at a Gold Hill market.

Ruth V. Howell, 38, Portland, Ore., was indicted on a charge of obtaining property by false pretenses involving a check passed at a Central Point market.

Royal Harlacher, 36, of Medford, was indicted on felony charges of issuing a check without sufficient funds in the bank. The charge involves a check passed at a local storage company.

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