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Michael Pool*

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BELL CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM SERIES

Although Dr. Bell and Mr. Watson won't be present November 20, the results of their efforts will be the focal point as several leading scholars discuss the social impact of the telephone in the first in a series of five seminars to be held at M.I.T. The seminars, sponsored through a grant by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, are part of the centennial activities celebrating the first transmission of an oral message over Bell's invention on March 10, 1876.

The seminars will view the social effects or impacts of the telephone. Among general areas to be discussed are effects on urban and suburban settlement, effects on social mores and human relations, and effects on lifestyles.

The first seminar will be held November 20, at the Marlborough Lounge (Bldg. 37, Room 252) and will deal with the sociological effects of telephone use. A paper entitled "Bell's Electrical Toy: What's the Use?" will be presented by Sidney Aronson, Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College, New York. Dr. Aronson has written on the effect of the phone on the individual and is currently working on a book dealing with the general field of telephone sociology. Donald Ball, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria, B.C. will present a paper entitled "Sociologically Walking Through the Yellow Pages". Dr. Ball has written on the phone as it relates to social institutions. Another scholar presenting a paper at the first seminar is Suzanne Keller, Professor of Sociology at Princeton University whose research includes the impact of the phone on the nuclear family. The fourth paper at the opening session is by Henry Boettinger, Director of Corporate Planning at AT&T. Mr. Boettinger has written a personal history of Bell and Watson's invention and early entrepreneurial efforts.

It is fitting that the telephone centennial activities be held at M.I.T. Several historians believe that the first public demonstration of Bell and Watson's early membrane and solenoid device was held before the Society of Arts on May 25, 1876 on the M.I.T. campus in Boston.

The second seminar in the series will look at uses of the phone. Scheduled January 29, it will feature psycho-linguist Emanuel Schegloff of U.C.L.A.; Dr. Paladugu Rao, Head of Eastern Illinois University's Information System Department and author of several articles on the use of the phone in education; and Dr. David Lester, psychologist at Stockton State College in New Jersey and co-editor of Crisis Intervention, who has examined telephone counseling and hot-line services.

Later seminars are scheduled for February 12, 26 and for March 9 and 10 in conjunction with the centennial celebration. Among those scheduled to participate are Ronald Abler, geographer at Pennsylvania State University; Asa Briggs, historian and Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University, England; Colin Cherry, communications theorist at Imperial College, England; Jean Gottman, geographer at University of Oxford, England; Martin Meyer, journalist; Charles Perry, historian at University of the South; John R. Pierce, engineer at California Institute of Technology; Ithiel de Sola Pool, political scientist at M.I.T.; Alex Reid, telecommunications specialist in England; and Bertil Thorngren, management scientist at the Stockholm School of Economics.

The seminars are being organized by M.I.T.'s Research Program on Communications Policy. The schedule of the seminars is attached.

BELL CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM SERIES

Session One - November 20th "The Sociology of the Telephone"

Sidney Aronson, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College, New York
Donald Ball, Chairman of the Department of Sociology, University
of Victoria, B.C.

Suzanne Keller, Professor of Sociology at Princeton University
Henry Boettinger, Director of Corporate Planning, AT&T

Session Two - January 29th "The Telephone: Usage and Applications"

Emanuel Schegloff, Professor of Sociology, U.C.L.A.

David Lester, Professor of Psychology, Stockton State College,
New Jersey and co-editor of Crisis Intervention

Paladugu Rao, Chairman, Information System Department, Eastern
Illinois University

Session Three - February 12th "The Development of Telephone Service"

Charles Perry, Professor of History, University of the South

Ronald Abler, Professor of Geography, Pennsylvania State University

Ithiel de Sola Pool, Professor of Political Science, M.I.T.

Session Four - February 26th "Innovation and Diffusion"

Colin Cherry, Professor of Telecommunications, Imperial College,
England

Asa Briggs, Vice-Chancellor, Sussex University, England

Bertil Thorngren, Professor of Economics, Stockholm School of
Economics

Session Five - March 9 & 10th "The Telephone Experience"

Martin Meyer, journalist

Alex Reid, Head, Long Range Studies Divisions, Telecommunications
Headquarters, British Post Office

John Pierce, Professor of Engineering, California Institute of
Technology

Jean Gottman, Professor of Geography, University of Oxford, England

John Brooks, writer