New phone service has disadvantages

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One serious drawback to the system is that there is no verification of account number at the time of the call. When the caller picks up the phone and dials a long distance number by the "dialed" method, a computer will record the number he is calling from, the account number, and the number called, but no verification of the account number is made.

This means that if the caller dials an incorrect account number, the call is still put through, and the error cannot be detected until the bill arrives at the end of the month. If the number does not represent a legitimate account, the cost of the call is billed to the originating phone.

Commenting on this practice, Superintendant of Telecommunications Morton Berlan said, "Abuse tends to come not so much from persons familiar with the phone but from persons with access to the phone." He added that this leaves the responsibility of controlling telephone usage with the persons in that office.

Berlan admitted that the failure of the system to verify the account number at the time the call is placed would leave phones open to a certain amount of fraud, but he noted that the alternative would be to set up a very complex and expensive computer library system to check the legitimacy of each call. If a case of fraud were detected, Berlan explained, the information related to the incident would be forwarded to the supervisor of the person involved, or to the Dean's office if that person was a student.

According to Professor Jack Kerckhove, Chairman of the Committee on Discipline, telephone fraud is regarded as "an misuse of Institute facilities," and considered by the Committee to be a serious offense.

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