Editorial:
Big Brother will be watching you

H e’s a few years later than George Orwell predicted, but Big Brother has been working hard to find new ways to monitor us. The FCC will allow him to watch us all a little closer. This time, however, we have an added bonus that not even the characters in 1984 could believe: We will not only be monitored via the Internet, but also have to pay for such a privilege.

The other difference is that in this performance, the role of Big Brother will be played by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). It seems as though the FCC has recently decided that it wasn’t enough to hold to its 1994 Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA) that required certain technologies to be engineered in such a way to enable wiretapping. Now it is retracting its original decision to exempt the public Internet from these regulations.

Of course, it’s not enough that the FCC now wants to wiretap all “facilities-based Internet service providers,” which includes any college that provides its own Internet service. In order for all affected parties to comply, they must pay to upgrade their own networks in order to ensure that the technology will be compatible with the FCC’s wiretapping capabilities.

Rider will be affected by this new order, as it serves in a sense as its own Internet service provider, uses its own firewalls and makes its own policies and rules for its network. Additionally, since Rider’s network connects to the public Internet, it is not protected by the exemptions that keep a private network from being monitored.

Thankfully, colleges are doing whatever they can to fight like hell against this revision of CALEA. While the blatant invasion of privacy is a worrisome issue, college administrations seem to be more concerned with the cost of the FCC’s misguided ambitions. It probably should be something that worries college students, too, since the nationwide upgrading of college Internet technologies comes with a $7 billion price tag.

Even though this is a surmised combined cost, one has to keep in mind that each academic institution forced to upgrade its network has to find a way to cover this unnecessary cost. And what better way is there for a college to raise a little extra money than by raising its tuition?

Individuals and organizations are also vocally opposing CALEA, as many don’t quite understand what there is to gain from the invasion of privacy. They see the whole thing was merely “satire.”

Someone in the FCC seems to be forgetting that college is, above all, about education. It’s already expensive for those of us who are lucky enough to work toward a college degree, and countless others are denied the opportunity to further their educations for want of money. Additionally, CALEA is putting us one step closer to the 1986 world of Oceania, invasive Telescreens and the oppressing omniscience of Big Brother. If the FCC isn’t careful, it’s going to make a costly mistake that turns college into an unaffordable fishbowl, as well as severely limiting the freedom of the Internet.

This weekly editorial expresses the majority opinion of The Rider News editorial board and is written by the Opinion Editor.

Freshman Poll Results
Questions by The Rider News. Check back each week for the RU Connected poll results!

How did you spend your Halloween?
Answering the door and wearing a mask to scare those kids (19.0%)
Staying in my dorm room or house (38.1%)
Going to Halloween parties (28.6%)
Getting dressed up and trick-or-treating (14.3%)

Vote online at RU Connected

Reality Check:
Thompson’s video game crusade

Miami lawyer Jack Thompson has a stick — or maybe a baseball bat — up his butt. After trying to rid the world of video games, wrote a letter and sent copies to the press and to Douglas Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association (ESA).

Thompson proposed that he would give $10,000 to a favorite charity of Paul Eibler, chairman of Take Two Interactive, if someone would manufacture and distribute a video game concept of Thompson’s creation.

Take Two, with Rockstar Games, published the controversial Grand Theft Auto series, which Thompson claims inspired an 18-year-old gamer to shoot three police officers in 2003. Ironically, Thompson’s game design negates his own purpose. It would feature a father who, after his son is beaten to death by a baseball bat-wielding gamer, exacts revenge on the gaming industry by killing executives of a video game company, decapitating CEO Paula Eble and her family and urinating on their brain stems.

Penny Arcade, an online gaming comic, joked, “If somebody actually made violent games, would he have to sue himself?”

Now it just so happens that someone made this game. Thompson then withdrew his $10,000 offer, claiming the whole thing was merely “satire.”

Mike Krahulik, co-creator of Penny Arcade, sent Thompson an e-mail informing him that his $10,000 proposal was substantially smaller than what Penny Arcade raised as part of a charity event.

What Krahulik didn’t realize was that his phone number was in the e-mail. Thompson called him to threaten legal action if Krahulik contacted him again. Krahulik responded by writing a $10,000 check in Penny Arcade’s name to the ESA. The memo on the check read, “For Jack Thompson, Because Jack Thompson Won’t.”

Gamers then pumped their fists and shouted “Boo-ha-ha!”

Thompson is making this an on-going conflict. He contacted the police, requesting that they shut down “this little extortion factory” and claiming that Penny Arcade was “criminaly harassing” him.

Meanwhile, Dr. David Walsh, founder of the

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