

In the never-never land of snooping, we could stand on the brink of Orwellian nightmare.

[From the Evening Star, May 4, 1965]

TESTS TO THE TEST

Representative Cornelius E. Gallagher has performed a useful service by attacking the psychological tests still being used to pry into the private lives of Government workers and applicants.

The New Jersey Democrat reports that the Export-Import Bank and the State Department have both stopped using the questionnaires, but that one test still in use elsewhere has 300 statements calling for yes or no responses. Among the statements the person being tested is asked to confirm or deny are these:

"I feel very guilty about my sins."

"I am contented with my sex life."

"I sometimes think that I failed in love."

"I feel that my sexual instinct is as strong as my ambition."

These and other questions like them constitute "mental wire-tapping" in the view of Representative Gallagher. He gives as his personal most detestable query the one that asks the subject to agree or disagree with, "I find answering these questions to be a rather unpleasant task."

It is both an unpleasant task and one which our Government certainly should not inflict upon its employees, actual or potential.

Such prurient snooping has sometimes been defended on the grounds that the questions only serve to indicate a pattern of attitudes and are not actually used against the victim. Such a defense misses the point entirely. One would certainly hope the sheets are not used for blackmail or general terrorism. But even if they were thrown away unread, their use would be wrong. Americans should not have to submit to the "unpleasant task" at all.

The Congressman calls the testers "brain watchers" and he has thus put his finger on the undoubted ambition of many specialists in that line of work. Fascinating as it may be in a laboratory, the practice has no place in the U.S. Government.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Sept. 29, 1965]

PEEPING ON THE GRAND SCALE

Psychological testing, like testing for aptitudes, doubtless has its place and uses. But it is a question whether the wholesale peeping into people's minds that is going on in Government, industry, and schools is desirable, necessary or even effective.

Winding up a 3-month inquiry into such psychological and personality testing, a House Government Operations subcommittee heard pleas from a number of witnesses that Congress adopt curbs against the indiscriminate use of the quizzes. It is easy to see why.

The committee found, among other nauseous examples, that employees of the Bonneville Power Administration being considered for promotion were asked questions like "Which would you rather do: (a) kiss a person of the opposite sex, or (b) experiment with new things. Choose one."

It further learned that the Labor Department last year gave psychological tests to more than 20,000 applicants for counseling jobs in youth opportunity projects. The applicants were supposed to give their reactions to the following kinds of statement: "Most people worry too much about sex," and, "I think Lincoln was greater than Washington."

Moreover, thousands of schoolchildren, under research projects financed by the U.S. Office of Education, have undergone psychological testing in an attempt to probe their attitudes toward sex, religion, and family life.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about it all is the docility with which candidates for Government jobs, Federal employees, people in industry—where testing seems on the increase—and schoolchildren tolerate the intimate questioning. Especially with a tool still of dubious value.

One reason, perhaps, is that advanced by Dr. Karl Smith, professor of industrial psychology at the University of Wisconsin: "The American people have been fooled into believing that few simple-minded true-false or multiple choice ques-