

LETTERS

SAY "NO" TO CENSORSHIP

Everyone keeps writing to you about how good your magazine is, and you can add my name to the list. I've enjoyed **Radio-Electronics** through the years, and look forward to it each month. Your overall view of all electronics, with computers added, is just the right touch. Don't change the format.

On the other hand, what ever happened to your pieces on satellite receivers? I've followed this subject with much interest, and would like to keep up with the latest information. Reading between the lines, a person could think that those articles have been dropped because of threats about lawsuits. I hope this is not the case.

I am apprehensive about censorship, and the censoring of technological ideas is particularly frightening. Several letters in recent months have argued against some articles you've printed, and I couldn't disagree more. **Radio-Electronics** is not showing "how to" evade radar speed traps, or break VideoCipher, but is giving *information* on how the technology works—two entirely separate concepts.

If we block the practice of technology exchange and discussion, how can we teach future generations? In the March 1988 "Letters" column, a young man gives thanks to **Radio-Electronics** for his education, training, and future. Can we stifle the future of others, because someone wants to curtail our exchange of ideas?

TOM KNIERIM
Rock Port, MO

LASER LISTENER

A letter I wrote appeared in **Radio-Electronics'** November 1987

"Letters" column. In it, I made two key points. First, federal law prohibits the assembly, possession and use of electronic eavesdropping devices. Second, **Radio-Electronics** erred in publishing plans for an electronic eavesdropping device and encouraging its readers to build and use it.

Please note that I did not chastise **Radio-Electronics** for publishing plans for a "Laser Listener" (October 1987). I did criticize the publication of such plans within the same article that encouraged the use of the device for illegal purposes.

Nevertheless, readers John Williams ("Letters," January 1988) and William Ritz ("Letters," February 1988) have criticized my letter. Mr. Williams implied that I oppose the Constitution's guarantee of freedom of the press. Mr. Ritz agreed with my contention that **Radio-Electronics** should warn its readers "...of the consequences of illegal usage..." But he incorrectly characterized me as wanting the magazine to withhold information. He implies that I also criticized the publication of "...detailed plans for various descramblers, decoders, transmitters..."—subjects not even mentioned in my letter. I'm offended that **Radio-Electronics** published letters criticizing my original letter for views it doesn't even contain.

As for the legal questions raised, thus far I've not seen **Radio-Electronics** take a stand. I believe, at this point, the magazine owes its readers an explanation of its position on the matter. Now that **Radio-Electronics** has been informed about the federal electronic eavesdropping law, does the magazine stand by the Richard Pearson's statement in the "Laser Listener"



article that "A better and safer way to bug a room is to use a laser beam to eavesdrop..."? Does the magazine stand by the article's subtitle, "Use a light beam to listen in to anything, anywhere, anytime," and the Table of Contents teaser, "Eavesdrop using a beam of light"?

Each of those quotes recommends that readers commit acts defined as felonies under state and federal statutes. It is entirely possible that **Radio-Electronics**, and Mr. Williams and Mr. Ritz, do not agree with those laws. I don't happen to agree with all aspects of them myself. On the other hand, I seriously doubt that your readers would want their homes monitored by a neighbor with a laser listener. Nor would **Radio-Electronics** want a competing publication to determine confidential publishing schedules with the help of such a device.

In recent years, the term "computer hacker" has been misapplied by the popular press to widely publicized computer criminals. That might happen to electronics experimenters if our magazines encourage us to build and use such illegal equipment as the Laser Listener.

FORREST M. MIMS, III

AES AWARDS PROGRAM

The Audio Engineering Society Educational Foundation has announced the opening of its 1988 educational grant program for university studies with emphasis on audio topics. The awards—for graduate students only—are made annually. Successful applicants may request a one-time renewal of their grants.

Completed applications must be received by June 1 to be consid-