

# Bronner's Research Reveals Consumerism is not a New Concept

By Jan Travers

College students are taking a bum rap. Every time one of us mentions he is here to improve his future earning power, society jumps in with their theory that young adults are only interested in material success, leading to the moral decay of America.

There is no denying that America is a nation of mass consumers, however, surprisingly this is not a new phenomenon. As early as the mid-1860's this consumerism has been growing. Industrialization, which occurred just after the Civil War, made

more goods available to the masses.

Dr. Simon Bronner, associate professor of folklore and American studies, will explore the growth of consumer goods in our lives at a conference titled, "Accumulation and Display: The Development of American Consumerism 1880-1920" November 7 and 8. The conference, under the direction of Bronner as coordinator, is being sponsored by Winterthur Museum with assistance from Penn State and the University of Delaware, at the Winterthur Museum and Gardens, Winterthur, Delaware. Nationally recognized scholars,

including the Capital College's Michael Barton, professor of , will explore the growing accumulation and display of goods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This conference will mark the first time scholars have met and discussed their research in a public forum, according to Bronner. "We want to explore the field to see if consumption is uniquely American and how the roots of consumerism took hold in this country." Bronner feels that an understanding of consumption could lead to predicting future living patterns and lifestyles.

Bronner, who became interested

in this field when writing his latest book "Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society in America" (University Press of Kentucky, 1986), is looking to involve the American studies program at Penn State, Harrisburg in this new field of study by drawing on local resources. In addition to living in the state capital region, Bronner mentioned local vendors responsible for early materialism. John Wanamaker, of Philadelphia, took over a New York department store, Stewart's Marble Palace, in 1886 and subsequently became the first retailer to use display advertising in newspapers on a

regular basis.

Sears and Montgomery-Wards became household names in the 1890's when they reached several million homes, many in rural areas, with their catalogues. In addition, these two retailers were among the first to introduce a system of credit to ensure a larger audience for their goods. This area is also among the first nationwide to build shopping center, said Bronner.

All these resources could be explored to attempt to find the roots of today's consumerism. "Penn State University at Harrisburg could become the leader in this field," concluded Bronner.

## Reach Out To Touch Registrar

By Thalia Cook

Have you heard about the new concept in registration, "Touchtone" registration? B.Y.U. started it three years ago. Ten other institutions now use the system and twenty more are to begin this academic year.

Touchtone registration offers significant advantages such as:

-It is relatively inexpensive and efficient, which keeps registration costs down.

-It allows students to decide, on the spot, exactly what classes they will take.

-All expenses including tuition, housing, board and parking are also computed.

-Students can register early.

-The school can collect payments early.

-Faculty can determine early if classes are filling up and new sections can be added if necessary.

-Systems are simple to use and

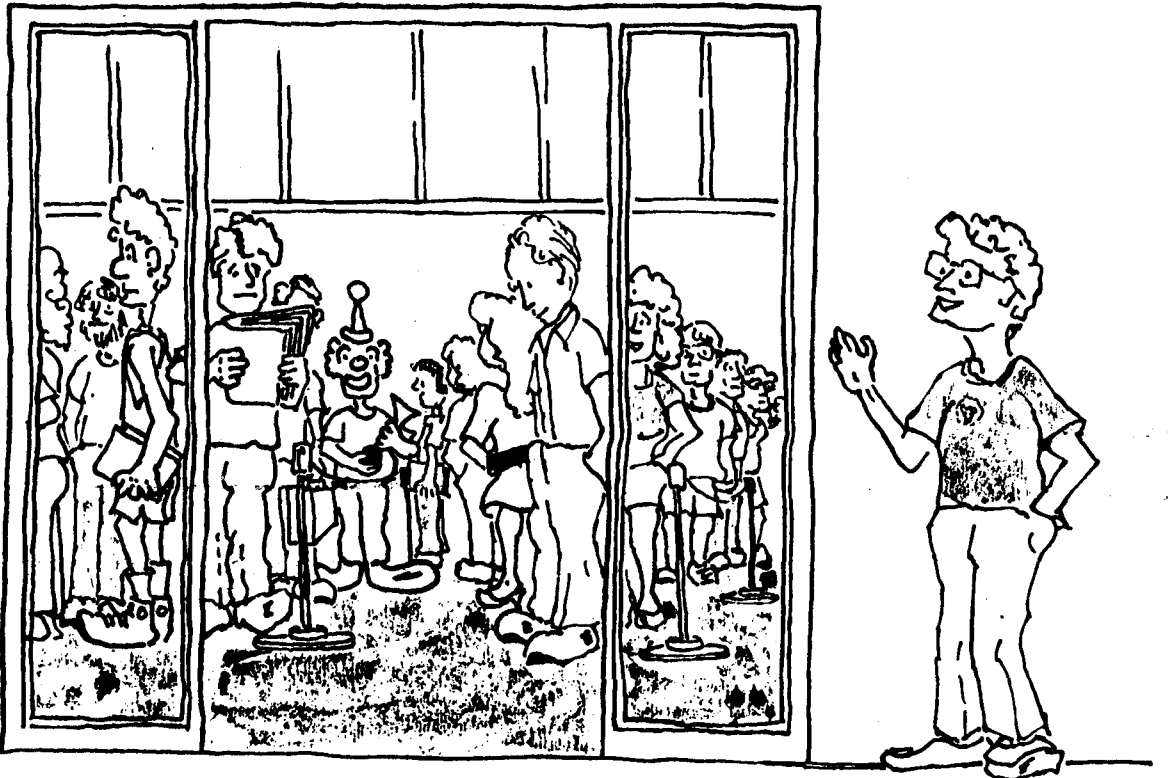
are practically faultless.

Texas A&M will start using the country's largest and most expensive touchtone registration system in November. Another school already using a touchtone system is Georgia State. That system cost \$130,000.

It has 32 telephone lines, making it one of the largest systems. Georgia State estimates that the system will pay for itself in one year.

Dorothy Guy, Registrar, says that Penn State has some drop/add via telephone, but she has not heard of any plans for a touchtone registration system for Penn State in the near future.

The University would be pleased to accept the "Touchtone" system as a gift from the class of 1987!



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