

Bill Rea ? I'm on camera all the time

I am the first to admit I don't understand all there is to know about social media.

I don't Tweet or Text or any of those others things that are so trendy these days. I know how to get on the internet and send and receive emails. Considering I have been working in the communications field for more than 30 years, I probably should be more up on the latest trends. In my own defence, I'm too busy communicating in this forum to learn other ways to communicate.

But if I don't understand the workings of all this technology, I know I am in very good company. And even those who use this stuff regularly might not appreciate the other issues involved with what they're doing, including the consequences.

We're always hearing stories about people who express foolish thoughts over some of these social network vehicles. It's not too surprising. When it comes to simple conversation, we all occasionally come out with remarks we wish we could have back. When was the last time you got through a whole day without such an episode. And it's the same with other forms of communication. I've sent out lots of emails I've regretted, like probably everyone else.

Another consequence is the occasionally dumb thoughts we express can get out in the public domain, and we don't realize it until it's too late.

A good recent example involved Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling. From what I understand, he made some foolish and offensive remarks that were being recorded without his knowledge, and they ended up being made public. I also understand he was speaking in the privacy of his own home, but the comments went out, and he had to answer for them; big time.

At the time, I heard a number of commentators stress the fact there might not be any such thing as privacy any more.

So if we transgress, the whole world might find out about it.

Which brings us to the Toronto bus driver who was caught on video recently running a red light. I've seen the video. It was taken from a car that was following the bus in another lane. I have also read the letter the driver wrote to her superiors, calling the incident "an unacceptable lack of judgment."

Was it? Certainly a driver should not be running red lights, but it happens, and there are sometimes other factors and circumstances that can mitigate the infraction. I think most of us who drive are guilty of the occasional infraction. I've committed a few in my time. It's probably more common among those of us who drive a lot in our jobs.

I don't know whether this driver should have lost her job. We all make mistakes, but a bus driver is responsible for the lives of a number of other people. Mistakes like that can really hurt. On the other hand, there are a lot of people who are showing a sympathetic side toward this driver, including the guy who submitted the video.

What did he expect would happen?

The reality that we have to live with is just about anything we might say or do can easily end up being public information. Maybe we should think about that for a minute or two. At what point are we going to have to start answering for what we think?

Ever read Nineteen Eighty-Four?

It is true that it's hard to go anywhere these days without being on some camera.

On an impulse while writing this, I got up and went looking for the nearest camera. It didn't take long. There's a walkway next to the building that houses the Citizen office, with a prominently-placed sign stating the area is under 24-hour surveillance.

I have no problem with that. There's a parking area at the rear of the building that some of us in this office use (I generally only use it if I'm working late at night). Although it's well-lit, it can be ominous walking through there after dark, especially, I would think, for women. It adds a bit more security.

How many stores now monitor customers. Sometimes when I'm standing in line in a store, I will kill time by trying to spot the cameras. It's seldom hard to do.

The idea of cameras in stores is really nothing new. They have been around at least 40 years. During his time in the retail sector, my father had cameras installed in his store in an effort to combat shoplifting. He made no secret of it. In fact, he had flyers announcing the presence of cameras tucked into bags with customers' purchases. My very first job was filling bags at the store, and my dad nagged me to make sure the flyers went in.

These cameras have been around for years, yet I have heard no outcry ? ever.

Walk into a school these days. Most of them have cameras in the halls and I can't imagine anyone raising a fuss over that, considering it involves the safety of children. There have been just too many horror stories over the years.

And even when we don't have guys shooting videos of buses running red lights, many intersections are equipped with such cameras. I haven't been caught yet, largely because I try to avoid activities that will result in traffic tickets. My insurance rates are high enough, thank you. If there's opposition to these cameras, it's pretty silent.

The only time I've ever heard complaints was about 20 years ago, when the Bob Rae government, in one of its very few moves I agreed with, brought in photo radar.

It was a great program because it helped reduce speeding and provided money for the Province. And the best part was, all the contributions were voluntary. I drove the 400 highways every day photo radar was in effect and never contributed a dime, simply because I chose not to speed excessively.

The problem, as far as I'm concerned, was there were a lot of drivers out there who like to speed, and photo radar made it hard for them to get away with it.

The funny part involved arguments some of these jokers put up. Some called it invasion of privacy. Yeah, right! You walk into just about any store or through just about any public area, including the walkway next to the Citizen office, and your every move is going to be recorded, along with every move of who ever you happen to be with. If it's someone you shouldn't be with, as far as your spouse is concerned, then that's your worry.

It would be nice if someone could explain the difference to me. I'm sure there are lots of you out there willing to try, but trust me ? none of you will succeed

