General Information

Source: NBC Nightly News
Creator: Tom Brokaw/John Chancellor
Event Date: 05/14/1992
Air/Publish Date: 05/14/1992

Description

In this commentary, NBC's John Chancellor says we're drowning in junk mail, direct mail, and other unwanted mail, and he thinks the post office should do something about it.

Keywords
Junk Mail, Direct Market, Advertising, Advertisers, Consumers, Post Office, Privacy, Change of Address

Citation

MLA
Transcript

Commentary: On Privacy, Junk Mail and the Post Office

TOM BROKAW, anchor:

Time now for commentary from John Chancellor, who has been reading both the bold and the fine print. John, what did you find?

JOHN CHANCELLOR (Commentary):

Tom, one of life's enduring lessons is that the big type giveth and the small type taketh away. As in a card you get from the post office. The big type says, 'Moving? Your change of address card is enclosed.' The small type says, 'Your new address may be given to others.' Others? Your ex-mother-in-law? The Chinese secret police? The post office doesn't say, and besides, you have absolutely no choice in this. If you want your mail forwarded, you must fill out that card. If you fill out that card, your new address can be sold. The Postal Service sells it to direct-mail advertisers and credit agencies, and when it's sold your new address is out there on the open market for anyone to buy.

Which is certainly not in the spirit—in the spirit of the laws which say people have a right to privacy, and more than 30 million people change their address every year. The Postal Service says that selling your new, correct, address to advertisers reduces the amount of mail that goes to your old, incorrect, address, and that saves money. OK, but you still should have a chance to approve. There was a hearing today in Washington on a sensible proposal from Congressman Bob Wise of West Virginia: put a yes or no check-off box on the change of address card. If you don't want your new address put up for sale, you can say no. We are drowning in junk mail, direct mail, and unwanted mail. How about some privacy for a change?

Tom:

BROKAW: Thank you, John.