

protection of his property and of his very life, left largely to the law of the individual States.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the misleading way the issues have been formulated, the parties have attached great significance to the characterization of the telephone booth from which the petitioner placed his calls. The petitioner has strenuously argued that the booth was a "constitutionally protected area." The Government has maintained with equal vigor that it was not.<sup>8</sup> But this effort to decide whether or not a given "area," viewed in the abstract, is "constitutionally protected" deflects attention from the problem presented by this case.<sup>9</sup> For the Fourth Amendment protects people, not places. What a person knowingly exposes to the public, even in his own home or office, is not a subject of Fourth Amendment protection. See *Lewis v. United States*, 385 U. S. 206, 210; *United States v. Lee*, 274 U. S. 559, 563. But what he seeks to preserve as private, even in an area accessible to the public, may be constitutionally pro-

<sup>7</sup> See, e. g., *Time, Inc. v. Hill*, 385 U. S. 374. Cf. *Breard v. Alexandria*, 341 U. S. 622; *Kovacs v. Cooper*, 336 U. S. 77.

<sup>8</sup> In support of their respective claims, the parties have compiled competing lists of "protected areas" for our consideration. It appears to be common ground that a private home is such an area, *Weeks v. United States*, 232 U. S. 383, but that an open field is not. *Hester v. United States*, 265 U. S. 57. Defending the inclusion of a telephone booth in his list the petitioner cites *United States v. Stone*, 232 F. Supp. 396, and *United States v. Madison*, 32 L. W. 2243 (D. C. Ct. Gen. Sess.). Urging that the telephone booth should be excluded, the Government finds support in *United States v. Borgese*, 235 F. Supp. 286.

<sup>9</sup> It is true that this Court has occasionally described its conclusions in terms of "constitutionally protected areas," see, e. g., *Silverman v. United States*, 365 U. S. 505, 510, 512; *Lopez v. United States*, 373 U. S. 427, 438-439; *Berger v. New York*, 388 U. S. 41, 57, 59, but we have never suggested that this concept can serve as a talismanic solution to every Fourth Amendment problem.