

It is not enough to say "It can't happen here"; our grandfathers said that about television.

Now, let us compound the concern. Assuming a computerman who was dishonest, unscrupulous or bent on injury, there would be nothing sacred. We could be destroyed.

Adm. Hyman Rickover has expressed a fundamental concept concerning these problems: he states that we must realize that the power of these computers is technology, and technology must serve man; man must never blindly accept technology, he must take up the challenge and control it. It is a force he has to master and use to his benefit.

The admiral exhorts us to be faithful to individual basic values, to preserve our right of privacy and independence and to bend this fantastic new technology to our principles. It is the function of lawgivers, in Admiral Rickover's view, to set the limits within which computer men can operate. He makes it clear that this is not a limit on science or knowledge but only on our use of knowledge and technology.

The concept of such control is ancient. Fire controlled is our friend; uncontrolled it is devastating. The wheel is man's servant and yet his greatest exterminator. The computer is another two-edged sword. It will take more than the controls of the "horse-and-buggy" days to use computers for our benefit and yet keep them from making shreds of human dignity, privacy, and freedom.

To provide an example, despite the flood of technical language some Government consultants use to camouflage their recommendations, the fact remains that a central data service bank would require:

One, that confidential information now in Government files would be forwarded to a new group and used for other purposes than it was originally given; and

Two, that a new group would have the code and would know the names, addresses and background of the people who submitted the confidential information.

Tying the two together would be an easy matter.

It is held that personal dossiers are not intended, but no thoughtful computerman can deny that they are a logical extension of present plans. I am pleased to say that computer men as a group are deeply concerned with the problem of controlling information storage and retrieval so that no one ever will be able to take away our basic freedoms through these means.

One last point: The argument is made that a central data bank would use only the type of information that now exists and since no new principle is involved, existing types of safeguards will be adequate. This is fallacious. Good computer men know that one of the most practical of our present safeguards of privacy is the fragmented nature of present information. It is scattered in little bits and pieces across the geography and years of our life. Retrieval is impractical and often impossible. A central data bank removes completely this safeguard.

I have every confidence that ways will be found for all of us to benefit from the great advances of the computer men, but those benefits must never be purchased at the price of our freedom to live as individuals with private lives.