

the Budget has been quoted in the Washington Post as urging that valuable information is lost if confidences are kept and statistics are made anonymous too early in the game. No secrets would be kept from the central data center. The raw data about people's lives would be fed into the central computers without concern for confidentiality and the computers would be programed to act as the censors. If the Government is sincere in saying it is interested only in generalized statistics, then it would seem essential that all individual identification of a statistic be removed before the kernel of desired information is fed to any central computer system.

But apparently more than one central data center is envisioned, and at least one would deal with live people, not depersonalized statistics. In the Saturday Review of this past week John W. Macy, Jr., Chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, details in glowing terms the wonders of "Automated Government." In talking of the Federal Government's monumental job in keeping track of all its employees, he proposes that—

We must have integrated information systems. This will require the use of information across departmental boundaries * * * Direct tape-to-tape feeding of data from one department to another may become common.

He and others talk of the great gains to come from centralizing data about millions of people in or out of government. There would be the broadening of the horizons of knowledge, the greater efficiency, the dollars saved.

We should be wary of promises that the goals of such consolidation of data are only modest ones that would interest statisticians and planners. Unless there are safeguards, pressures will surely grow to assemble more and more specific data about specific individuals. When the social security program began we were assured that our social security number would be guarded as a secret so that no one could possibly use it to keep track of our movements. Today we must write our social security number not only on our income tax return, but must supply it to banks holding our money and to organizations making payments to us. Our social security number in fact is so easily obtainable that one nationwide investigating firm has a line on its standard form where the investigator must list the social security number of the person he has investigated.

Or consider the census. The authors of the U.S. Constitution called for an "enumeration" of the population every 10 years. But by 1960 the census has gone far beyond enumeration. Many millions of citizens in 1960 had to answer 165 questions about their lives, purchasing habits and incomes. And the pressure is growing to add a host of new inquiries such as ethnic origins, religious affiliation, schooling, et cetera, to the 1970 census. Failure to answer every question the census director decides to ask you can result in a fine or jail sentence.

We should also be concerned about what seems to be a lack of sensitivity among some administrative officials about the implications to the individual involved of becoming computerized by the Federal Government. The announcement of the creation of the task force detailed several points to be studied but no mention was made of exploring the impact on the citizen. And Mr. Macy in his enthusiastic descriptions of automating the Federal processing of personnel, said that the Government must ask: "What parts of the job can a com-