

puter do better—and which parts can men do better.” He is presumably influenced by the per-dollar performance criterion so popular now in Washington.

In all these plans for centralizing data about citizens it seems to me that the crucial question is whether we are letting technology get out of hand without being sufficiently concerned about human values.

There would seem to be a number of hazards in the growing fascination of the Government’s electronic file keepers with the idea of exchanging and pooling data on the lives of our citizens.

First, I believe the concept of having a central data bank for use in making decisions involving citizens threatens to encourage a depersonalization of the American way of life. Our people increasingly, and rightly, are resenting their treatment as numbers being controlled by a computer. This resentment is believed to be a factor in the student unrest at the vast State universities, where the student’s exams may be machine-graded and his ID number is often printed twice as large as his name.

As for the management of Government personnel by one super-machine, it should be noted that even the best of machines cannot assess the unique personality, the special talents, the particular aspirations and motivations of the individual citizen. And all the recent evidence indicates that any normal citizen performs best where he is encouraged to take personal responsibility for handling a special task in his own unique way.

Mr. Macy is pleased to report that in our automated Government hundreds of thousands of people already are being largely hired by machine. The applicant makes marks on paper in a form that can be digested by the computer. The machine grades him, decides what the passing grade will be for any particular batch of applicants, and then writes a letter advising each applicant if he has passed or failed. I am reminded of a description given me of some of the new automated food canneries. A truck brings baskets of peaches up to the automated building. Once the peaches are unloaded automated machinery takes over. The peaches are washed, peeled, sliced, pitted, siruped, canned, packed in cartons entirely by machine. The cartons, properly labeled and consigned, emerge out the other end of the building. Most of us applaud the automated processing of peaches. But does it follow that we should applaud the automated processing of people? I think not.

A second obvious hazard inherent in the central data banks is that they will increase the distrust of the citizens in their own Government and alienate them from it. People are becoming wary of what they tell their Government as they discover that information they are confiding for one purpose may be used to affect their life in some entirely different connection. If what they tell the FHA to get a home loan turns up as a knockout factor when they seek a job with a Government contractor, they will start being wary. And they will warn their friends to be wary.

In addition there will inevitably be a suffocating sense of surveillance as the public learns that their Government is developing an all-seeing eye. In the past, one of the hallmarks of totalitarianism, whatever its particular form, has been this sense that somewhere there is an all-seeing eye.