

a secret dossier was used to try to intimidate or discredit a person who was making statements embarrassing to certain high officials. The filekeepers of Washington have derogatory information of one sort or another on literally millions of citizens. The more such files are fed into central files, the greater the hazard the information will become enormously tempting to use as a form of control.

Some highly knowledgeable people have been issuing warnings about the hazards residing in exploitation of the computer. These are the computer designers themselves. One computer maker, Bernard S. Benson, has conceded that the concentration of power in the form of accumulated information can be "catastrophically dangerous." And at a meeting of computer experts sponsored by New York University, another expert, computer scientist Eldridge Adams, said that the electronic computer systems being used by Government agencies were collecting so much information about families and individuals that those who controlled the machines were achieving a "truly frightening" power. He said that without proper control the computers could convert our society into the Big Brother regime predicted in the book "1984."

Let us remember, 1984, is only 18 years away. My own hunch is that Big Brother, if he ever comes to these United States, may turn out to be not a greedy power seeker, but rather a relentless bureaucrat obsessed with efficiency. And he, more than the simple power seeker, could lead us to that ultimate of horrors, a humanity in chains of plastic tape.

I would hope that this committee, by its power to influence governmental procedures and to propose legislative safeguards—and the Congress, by its power to legislate and to exercise oversight—will take action promptly to assure that such a state can never come to pass in this land.

Thank you very much.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Packard, for your statement which gets to the heart of the fears that many of us have as we view the escalation of efficiency and economy that is always possible and probable in looking down the road of computer progress.

The real problem is not that a computerized data bank can be created. I think all of us agree that it can. There are some reasons why it should.

What this committee is seeking is suggestions you might offer as to how safeguards—as to what safeguards—can be installed in the computer process.

I am not satisfied in my own mind that such safeguards can be properly built in, but if they can be, what would you suggest?

Mr. PACKARD. If they can be installed, certainly I would suggest as a minimum that they must be. I think that the Congress should in its functioning as a watchdog of the executive arm of the Government, make sure that information does not leave one department to go into a central file until individual identification is removed. How this would be involved in Mr. Macy's proposal to make one vast Federal file of Government employees, I do not know. The only heartening thing about his proposal is that it does not involve all American citizens; it simply involves the millions who are involved in the Federal Government.