

The trouble comes in particular instances. The trouble is particular invasions of privacy all too frequently take place because, although we believe in it in general, we are frequently unable to see why a particular invasion should be prohibited. Every time a proposal comes along that would invade privacy in one way or another, there is somebody to say it is necessary, there is somebody to say that the information obtained is very reliable and important, and we have to have it, and there is somebody to say that there is no really important new invasion of rights, that is to say, there is someone who will explain that this does not make a very great new intrusion into the life of the individual.

Thus it is that devices like the lie detector, wiretapping, and eavesdropping are all too frequently a matter of practice because we think or somebody thinks that we have to have the information that can be obtained.

These particular devices have been discussed so much that I thought in talking about privacy today I would like to talk about the proposed Federal data center and use that as the way of talking about this problem of necessity, this problem of whether we have to have this particular invasion, too.

I do not know exactly what is proposed in a Federal data center. I will just have to guess. I will just have to assume that the various kinds of information that the Government now has in many different places and many different bureaus relating to school, relating to employment, relating to the Army, to criminal convictions, recommendations that come in from many sources about a person—that all of that would be centralized somewhere and available to authorized agencies or persons. I do not know who they would be.

MR. GALLAGHER. If I could narrow the issue, Professor, what is before this committee now for our consideration is a proposal by the executive branch for the establishment of a central data bank that would centralize the information collected by 20 agencies of the Government which now collect and publish information, such as the Census Bureau, Social Security, and many of the other agencies. Many of these are now protected by law as to confidentiality.

Along with the proposal is the warranty, for whatever it is worth, that the law will be adhered to and that there will be a protection of the individual who has given the information.

What is now before this committee and what it is concerned with is that while there are now 20 agencies that collect and publish information, there are many agencies of the Federal Government which collect and do not publish information, and we view this as a foot-in-the-door proposition through which eventually the collectors, but not particularly the publishers of information, will also use it in the interest of efficiency and economy. I think what we are considering here is a new proposition, certainly something new in the Federal Government, a departure from the original right of protection of the individual. That is the issue before the committee.

PROFESSOR REICH. Many thanks. I take it we are talking primarily about information that does exist somewhere now, and a proposal to centralize it.

One of the things we have to deal with is the argument that the individual be no worse off after this proposal than before because all the