

report says, "The exchange of information between databanks, a growing practice, may result in a single item of inaccurate information causing harm to an individual on different occasions and in different contexts." A few databanks — Statistics Canada is one — are forbidden by law to distribute any information about identifiable individuals, but most presume a proprietary right to exchange or sell all the information they have gathered. A man's statistics, divulged to obtain a driver's license, may be sold to commercial organizations who will use it to solicit his business, or his medical record may find its way from his doctor's office into a medical lecture room.

For Canadians the most difficult question may concern data stored in foreign banks. Eight per cent of the information about individual Canadians was stored in part or entirely in the United States (four labor unions had all data on Canadian members stored in the United States), and many American organizations — oil companies, insurance firms, health service organizations and lending institutions — stored some of their Canadian information there.

The Task Force concluded that the storage of data abroad threatens Canadian identity and "raises questions that relate to (other) invasions . . . Business activity may be lost to the country; so also may be that fragile entity, Canadian culture, which is and certainly will be increasingly sensitive to the content of computerized information systems as it is to the content of broadcast programs."

Having raised rather specific questions, the Task Force found it difficult to provide equally specific answers. It concluded that invasions of informational privacy are not yet sufficiently widespread to be a "social crisis," but suggested that appropriate measures be taken and offered some basic facts in determining what measures are appropriate:

- "Privacy is . . . in part . . . a synonym for political grievances, (there is concern about) the use of information systems by institutions to enhance their power.
- "The principal areas of specific concern . . . reside in the accuracy . . . of the data . . . the extent to which the individual concerned has been informed . . . and the uses to which it may be put.
- "The role of computers is ambivalent . . . computers as a function of their efficiency can be programmed to provide increased protection for privacy.
- "Canada faces particular problems. A great deal of personal information about Canadians, much of it highly sensitive, is stored beyond Canadian borders and therefore out of reach of Canadian law. This flow of information should be monitored and recorded and consideration given to encouraging the development of databanks in Canada.
- "Government as the principal collector and instigator of the collection of personal information has a key role to play."

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