RESEARCH INTO PRIVACY AND DATA BANKS

A.E. Gotlieb
Deputy Minister
Department of Communications
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C8

ABSTRACT

The issue of privacy represents, in many respects, a test issue
or case study of social and cultural problems in a post-industrial,
information-oriented, society. The issue has been created, in
part, as a direct consequence of the efficiency of computers as
information processors, and as an unintended product of the social
benefits generated by computers; it has been created in part also
as an expression of public concern about the relationship between
computer power and the potentially manipulative power of institu-
tions operating information systems. The issue has been the sub-
ject of extensive study in all advanced, western countries. The
Canadian Departments of Communications and Justice jointly
sponsored a Task Force inquiry, of which the report was published
in December, 1972. A special inter-departmental committee is at
present studying rules to protect privacy which could be applied
to data banks operated by the federal government. Consideration is
being given also to parallel issues such as the extra-territorial
location of data banks.