

8/4/73

NYT

Justice Dept. Is Urged to Seal Computer Files on Crime Cases

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3 (AP) — A coalition of Congressmen and lawyers demanded today that the Justice Department seal its computer files on criminal offenders until it can impose new restrictions to protect individual rights.

The group threatened Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson with a Federal court lawsuit if he rejects the demand.

The coalition was led by Senator Edward W. Brooks, Republican of Massachusetts, Representative Michael J. Harrington, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Barry Goldwater Jr., a Republican of California, and Gov. Francis W. Sargent, Republican of Massachusetts.

They offered to the Justice Department an administrative petition prepared by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and supported by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The group accused Mr. Richardson and the Federal Bureau of Investigation director, Clarence M. Kelley, of ignoring constitutional rights by maintaining instant-recall computer files on thousands of individuals. The files often are incorrect, incomplete and unnecessary, the group asserted.

The Justice Department declined comments, pending a re-

view of the group's formal complaint.

The petition specifically alleged that F.B.I. data collection procedures did the following:

¶Failed "to insure the accuracy or completeness of the data on individuals," by amassing arrest records without indicating later whether charges had been dropped or the individuals had been acquitted or convicted.

¶Allowed "virtually uncontrolled access to the data" to employers and other agencies "for the purpose of clearing employment, promotions, the granting of credit and other basic rights." The F.B.I. maintains that only law enforcement officials have access to the files.

¶Included the unnecessary filing of "a host of minor offenses, many of which are misdemeanors involving no harm to others."

As a result, the group said, "individuals whose names appear in the files have been denied employment, have been given stricter sentences, and have been treated more harshly by parole boards."

A spokesman for the lawyers' committee said the group had chosen to file an administrative complaint because of its dissatisfaction with Mr. Richardson's response to a plea for new Federal restrictions.