

# President's Pledge On Right of Privacy

Washington

In his State of the Union address last night, President Nixon promised to "make a historic beginning on the task of defining and protecting the right of personal privacy for every American."

In doing so, he touched on an issue that has been of increasing concern to Congress and various government departments for several years.

In his written message to Congress, he described the problem in part as one of a growing technical capability to collect and disseminate data on individuals. Another part of the problem, Mr. Nixon said, "is that clear definitions and standards concerning the right of privacy have not been developed and agreed upon."

The biggest controversy

involves the computerized criminal history files maintained by the FBI, which now contain records of about 450,000 individuals. So far only six states — Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania — supply information to the files, and 37 states are able to retrieve data from them.

But, within a decade, the FBI expects that all states will be in the system. Critics contend that the FBI fails to prevent unauthorized access to the files, permits the entry of incomplete and outdated information, and does not allow individuals an adequate way of reviewing and correcting their files.

Mr. Nixon promised "to erect new safeguards" to see that the right of privacy is respected but he did not detail any safeguards.

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