

State Aide Says Computer Systems

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WASHINGTON, March 10 —A high police official from New York State told Congress today that computerized personal information systems could be effective without infringing on the privacy of the individual citizen.

Dr. Robert R. J. Gallati, director of the New York State Identification and Intelligence System, said that such systems "are essential for the administration of criminal justice" and can be operated "with adequate security against unreasonable invasions of individual privacy."

"Indeed, I believe that they can be so developed and operated as to provide new dimensions of personal freedom and protection for civil liberties and constitutional rights," he told the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, headed by Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina.

Dr. Gallati's testimony markedly contrasted with earlier testimony that dwelt on the potential for inequities because of mistakes or erroneous information, blackmail through the use of confidential data, and the "chilling effect" from surveillance of political beliefs and actions.

New Agency Proposed

In other testimony, Robert P. Bigelow, a Boston lawyer who is an officer of the Association for Computing Machinery, recommended that a Federal agency, reporting to Congress, be authorized to provide standards for personal data banks maintained by the Government.

Caxton C. Foster, professor of Computer science at the University of Massachusetts, also urged Congress to "establish a regulatory commission with full powers over the collection, use and dissemination

of personal information," including those in the private sector.

In addition, Leslie Huckfield, a Labor Member of Parliament, said he had introduced a bill to set up a data bank tribunal and an independent data bank inspectorate in Britain. The agencies would grant licenses and check on the standards of accuracy and use of computerized information to prevent the evolution of what he called "a true goldfish bowl society."

System Is Described

Dr. Gallati, who holds a doctorate in law, heads an independent agency reporting directly to Governor Rockefeller. He cited the experience of the New York intelligence agency as evidence that personal privacy can be protected.

The intelligence system, set up by the New York Legisla-

ture in 1965, provides information on people and crimes from its central computer through a teletype network to 3,600 criminal justice agencies throughout the state.

Its 800 employes, operating on a \$500,000 annual budget, also use the computer to analyze information and evidence related to crime. Since 1968, it has been connected with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center and is planning similar connections with New Jersey and New England systems.

Dr. Gallati, a husky, plain-speaking policeman who called himself "a product of the sidewalks of New York," said that personal privacy was protected by limiting the users of the state system, restricting the type of information programed into the system, forbidding unauthorized disclosure, and permitting individuals to see their

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Can Protect the Individual

own files and make corrections.

Moreover, he said, the system's personnel are carefully trained and closely disciplined, extensive security precautions have been taken with the computer and its transmission lines, and the entire system is subjected to an annual review by the state executive branch, the Legislature and the public.

A 'Forgiveness Principle'

Further, he said that the system had adopted the "forgiveness principle," under which only records of people who are considered likely to be criminal repeaters are placed in the computer files.

Dr. Gallati said that these and other standards had been helpful in addressing the problem of privacy in Project SEARCH (System for Electronic Analysis and Retrieval of Criminal Histories), a 15-state experiment in which he represented New York.

"This system for the interstate exchange of criminal history records," he said, "was potentially very sensitive in its possible threat to privacy and civil liberties."

Project SEARCH was discontinued last December and its functions were taken over by the National Crime Information Center. Dr. Gallati said he was encouraged to believe that the Federal Bureau of Investigation would adopt standards similar to those of the New York system and Project SEARCH as it expanded its information system.