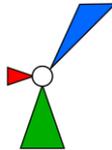


263 AE1

bncdoc.id	BNE
bncdoc.year	1989
bncdoc.title	Liberty and legislation.
bncdoc.info	Liberty and legislation. Sample containing about 33730 words from a book (domain: social science)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
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David Lee's classification	W_non_ac_soc_science

<263/c>	enveloped in a world-encompassing atmosphere of information messages and ‘noise’ of a variety and density not known before, able to plug in to one or a multiplicity of channels and capture information of a wide diversity of nature and origin, much of it junk. Once personal information gets into such a network it will be difficult if not impossible to restrict access to it; it could be that such an open system could be justified to the data subject as the latest desirable addition to the role of consumer in the acquisitive society -why not order one’s claret from one’s fireside by the keyboard direct from the château, with instant payment by electronic fund transfer at point of sale, debiting one’s bank account instantaneously? With the expansion and internationalisation of markets this may become commonplace. A decade ago the Chairman of Readers Digest in the U.K. could dismiss the pressure for legislation on data privacy as ‘like consumerism, a middle-class fad’. Perhaps the wheel has gone full circle and the middle class is now prepared to sell its birthright of privacy for the glittering prizes of acquisition. But that is not the end of the story; networks will not only serve the interests of the market; they bring within reach the possibility of the surveillance of whole populations, with serious implications for personal privacy. <u>In Britain it is easy to forget that, while we may have the publicly available electoral register, we are almost alone in Europe in not requiring each citizen to have a formally registered address, and to notify changes of address to the police. It is an aspect of privacy we should take more seriously; it may seem a frail distinction to draw when armed police can batter down your front door on suspicion that a wanted person may be inside, but at least it gives the possibility of some redress, and may make it more difficult to achieve the total surveillance of society. The arrival of the jackbooted armed emissaries of the state, battering the door in the small hours of the morning, has become the epitome of political repression of right and of left, particularly in respect of dissenting minorities. It is made possible because information about citizens is held by organs of the state. So it was when the Germans over-ran Holland in 1940 and within three days had rounded up large numbers of Jews - the Dutch population records which included religious affiliation were put to sinister use, promptly and efficiently even without the aid of modern technology. We can not afford to assume that all governments, ail public servants, will always be benign and free from corruption. No legislative curb can guarantee fair and benevolent treatment for individuals irrespective of</u>
	
<p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	
	<p><u>the fortunes of the political future</u></p>
	<p>; <u>laws</u> will not stop tyrants. At best <u>the existence of some checks and balances</u>, or <u>statutory tripwires</u>, may serve to alert the wary as to how things are moving. It is easy to be paranoid about IT and the future, and that is hardly justified; but constant</p>

vigilance is required. For Information Technology is going to transform all our lives - we have hardly seen anything yet. When every new house or flat is automatically provided with plug-in points for water, electricity, and information, each of them offering the instant service of a widespread network, everyday life will change. Our shopping and baking habits, our home record-keeping and correspondence, local and worldwide, our legal, medical and insurance affairs, our most intimate communications, could all be encompassed by our home data bank with its living connections to systems in the outside world; and by the two-way nature of those links and the ingenuity of the 'hacker' or by pure mischance all our secrets could be opened to the world. The effect of IT on personal life could be as profound as that of an earlier technological innovation, the motor car. The earliest horseless carriages were regarded as socially dangerous and the first legislation to control them required that each should be accompanied by three persons - a driver, a passenger in case the driver was taken ill, and a third person walking in front carrying a red flag. If at the time of the first Red Flag Act anyone had prophesied that within 100 years horseless carriages would be careering around by the million, they would have been thought dangerously deluded; no one would have believed that society would survive such an onslaught. Yet we have adapted our lives, more or less, to the motor car; the early legislation was progressively modified as technology advanced and attitudes changed until, by a process of social adaptation and general education, the current road traffic regulations and the Highway Code together just about control the monster. We are at the Red Flag stage with IT, and it is hardly possible to anticipate how the future will work out. In addition to vigilance we need education in the responsible uses of this new extension of man's powers, otherwise we might be driven to a fruitless Luddite destruction of computers because they seem able to take on a life of their own. IT presents a challenge to the responsible society which can not be ignored. Interventive Reproduction URSULA MITTWOCH 'We have a tradition that sex and reproduction must be attended by privacy, dignity and romance. It is a good tradition, provided we add a fourth attribute, namely understanding; for otherwise the fundamental life activities concerned with