
people

Men of the Year ...of a Kind

Dr. Willis Ware and Dr. Donald Bitzer have two things in common. One is that they were both selected "Man of the Year" by the Data Processing Management Assn. The other is that they are pioneering technologists who are actively and constructively trying to direct the computer's use in society. After a decade of leadership in examining the privacy problem, Dr. Ware was recently named to the President's Privacy Study Commission and elected vice-chairman. After spending 16 years on development and application of the wondrous computer-assisted instruction system, PLATO, Dr. Bitzer is now determined to take the system to the inner city schools, to raise the abominably low literacy rate of their students—"a liability to society."

Dr. Willis Ware

"My concern has been and will continue to be personal privacy. In the next several years it will become the top social issue." Those are the words of a man who holds three degrees in electrical engineering and in earlier years was known best for his hardware systems work. In fact, Dr. Willis Ware ventured into the computer field in rather stellar fashion, his first job being for Dr. John von Neumann at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J. He was part of the original staff that designed and developed the initial scientific digital computer, the computer that launched IBM and the 701.

In 1952 Ware moved on to the Rand Corp. in Santa Monica, Calif., where he was involved in the JOHNNIAC project and large-scale computer development for the military. Dr. Ware's commitments to privacy, as well as physical and data security, began at Rand, where many of the West Coast computer intelligentsia reside and military and "automation and society" problems are often tackled in parallel. Rand's Paul Baran started the privacy fever there, writing articles, making speeches, and in 1965, testifying before Congressman Gallagher's committee on the issue. The security issue, Ware recalls, was equally popular among "the whole California crowd. It looked to us that these issues needed to surface. Someone had to get research going, get responsibility going." In 1967

Ware, by then director of the computer department, organized the first session to discuss computer security and subsequently chaired a committee under the Defense Science Board which produced a "definitive document" on the issue. (One Defense Dept. document later produced by a Ware committee remains, unfortunately and some say "unnecessarily," classified.)

In 1972, Ware turned his talent for running productive committees to the now-famous HEW Special Advisory Committee on Automated Personal Data Systems. Ware inherited a rather stumbling effort and within a year pro-



DR. WILLIS WARE
... a decade of leadership

duced the landmark report that resulted in the Privacy Law of 1974.

"The privacy commission's charter," says Ware, is "to finish the job that the HEW group started. Primarily that is to establish guidelines for the law that will govern the private sector. He restated his warnings against transferring the 1974 law (governing only federal agencies) to the private sector. "We can't assume that what is good for the government is good for the private sector. Assume nothing." Each part of the law "must be a conscious decision." For example, the prohibition against secret data bases in the government *may* not be right in the private sector. Although he noted that data bases such as that kept cooperatively and sub rosa by the insurance companies should not be secret, "industry has to have the option of keeping some things quiet."

Ware hopes that the Privacy Law of 1974 is not cast in concrete. "As the Act becomes enforced, there should be enough feedback to adjust its provisions. The privacy commission could be the mechanism for collecting data about experience in its application." While the commission has no mechanism to take a strong position with respect to the States, many of which are passing their own privacy laws, its members are urging the states "not to take on private industry until we've sorted it out. It could be a very expensive proposition if they do." For exam-

ple, "it remains to be determined whether data is a commodity of interstate commerce," and that decision will affect each state's laws.

While the commission develops the guidelines, monitors the current law, and interfaces with the state governments, it will have to keep an eye on another privacy problem, says Ware. That has to do with the international transfer of data, a topic of growing discussion in many countries. "It will become an important issue in a few years. Perhaps the commission will be able to turn to it late in the two-year life."

For all that the commission plans to do within the next two years, it's not (theoretically) a fulltime job for any member. Dr. Ware estimates that he'll be spending about 20-30% of his time on that, the rest on projects at Rand. But what about the fact the commission has at least two of every other animal (lawyers, politicians, etc.), but only one computer man? Ware would have preferred the support of a second computer professional, but, he smiles, "One can only be persuasive and spend long hours at it."

Ware seems to spend long hours at everything. While at the DPMA meeting in Atlanta to accept his award, he and his wife Floy took a side trip up to Charlotte, S.C., to talk to its privacy board. Charlotte is participating in a HUD-sponsored project involving five cities. Each city is developing part of a management information system and each part is supposed to be transferable to other cities. Ware, who is also "keeping an eye on transferability," got into the project to check on whether the cities were trying to do something about privacy. Some are, and "it's very rewarding to know it's not a complete desert out there."

Ware is a rewarding man to talk to, "up front" as one colleague called him. He is full of information, enthusiasm and concern. "Look at the content of data bases. They concern a lot of people who care more about food, shelter and so on. They think it's more important to have the services than privacy, so they give a great deal of information about themselves. They don't understand the complexity of the issue. Then there's a friend of mine who says 'I don't care if they have information on me. I've lived a clean life.' Unless there's a genuine reason for having information on me, clean life or not . . ." He mused, "the tricky part is to get a set of safeguards that work. There's a reasonable chance we can do it in two years."

Dr. Donald Bitzer

Perhaps that's how he funds PLATO. Master magician Donald Bitzer has little trouble stealing a dime from an