

Congress represented on the committee).

Until recently, Bowman has felt that expecting the data center to carry out its mission without knowing the identities of individuals contained in its files would be unrealistic and unnecessary. In his view, the Census Bureau's excellent record of respecting the confidentiality of its data (by law, the Census Bureau cannot release data about individuals, even to the FBI) should itself be reassuring to those who worry about Big Brother. There is no reason, he suggested, why a national data center, governed by appropriate laws and regulations, could not be expected to do as well as the Census Bureau has done. (Rules of confidentiality now vary from agency to agency, however; the Internal Revenue Service, for example, allows investigators from the Department of Justice and certain other agencies to examine an individual's tax return.)

Further, Bowman has said that privacy would be protected by excluding certain information from the center altogether. The categories excluded would cover such material as personnel records (letters of reference, test scores, and performance ratings, for instance), medical records, and dossiers compiled by the FBI. Moreover, according to Bowman, even the temptation to compile individual dossiers would be largely avoided by restricting data kept by the center to samples, although the center would be allowed to draw on more complete data in the files of other agencies.

Bowman and his associates insist that all or most of the foregoing safeguards would have, as a matter of course, figured in plans for a computer center, even if the Gallagher subcommittee had not made such a point of the privacy issue. Now, however, Bowman finally has come around to accepting the additional safeguard which the subcommittee has regarded as of critical importance—to deny the data center knowledge of the identities of individuals in its files. Although its capabilities would be limited somewhat by this safeguard, the center would be able to accomplish most of its objectives, Bowman believes. He would have the Census Bureau and other agencies match up and consolidate data for the data center. A weakness in this is that these agencies would themselves be functioning as data centers, but, inasmuch as it would mean less centralized control, the Gallagher subcommittee believes the safeguard would be meaningful.

Chairman Gallagher, though reserving

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **LAIRD NAMES SEAMANS:** Defense Secretary-designate Melvin Laird this week named Robert S. Seamans, Jr., to be Secretary of the Air Force in the Nixon Administration. Seamans, a professor of aeronautics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology since March 1968, served as deputy administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) from December 1965 to January 1968. Seamans, who was, in effect, NASA's general manager (*Science*, 27 Sept.), had joined NASA in 1960. As Secretary of the Air Force, Seamans succeeds Harold Brown, recently named president of California Institute of Technology.

● **SOVIET TIDAL POWER STATION:** The Soviet Union has announced the operation of its first experimental pilot tidal power station on the Arctic Ocean and its intention to build additional, more extensive tidal power plants in the future. The pilot station, which now has a 400-kilowatt turbine to generate power, is located on the Barents Sea, 50 miles from Murmansk near Finland.

● **COLUMBIA HOUSING:** Teacher's College at Columbia University has announced plans for a \$59-million building program, including a housing development which will include poor families from the neighboring community. During university disruptions last spring, student critics charged the university with purchasing residential buildings for expansion and relocating poor families in unsatisfactory housing in distant areas of the city. College officials say that not less than 200 of some 1000 apartments in a 40-story tower will be reserved for community residents who will be charged low rents. The College plans to house graduate students and faculty in the remaining units. A library and new academic and research facilities are also included in the \$59-million expansion project. Teacher's College, which has 5500 graduate students, has separate financing, but is affiliated with Columbia University.

● **FDA INTEREST IN SOVIET PILL REPORT:** The Food and Drug Administration is attempting to obtain a Soviet public health service report, which endorses the use of intrauterine devices (IUD's) in Soviet family plan-

ning programs and questions the safety of the oral contraceptive. The Soviet report indicates the Russian government plans to begin mass production of IUD's because a series of tests have shown them to be superior to the pill.

● **SCIENCE WRITING AWARDS:** Prizes of \$1000 were awarded at the AAAS Dallas meeting to the three winners of the 1968 AAAS-Westinghouse Science Writing Awards. Walter Sullivan, science editor of the *New York Times*, won the award for science writing in newspapers with over 100,000 daily circulation for a series of ten articles on pulsars. John Hanchette, reporter for the *Niagara Falls Gazette*, won the award for newspapers with a circulation under 100,000 for a series on air pollution, and Tom Alexander, a *Fortune* associate editor, won in the magazine category for two articles on research on the nature of matter.

● **FAMILY PLANNING:** *Medical Handbook*, the standard clinical reference book of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) on world family planning programs, contraceptive devices, medical clinical practices, and a bibliography of family planning publications, may be obtained for \$2.50 (postpaid) from IPPF, 18-20 Lower Regent, London, S.W.1, England.

● **MED SCHOOL HOPEFULS:** A sharp rise in the number of medical school applicants is attributed to the change in draft requirements, which now limit first-year graduate school deferments to students in the medical health sciences. The number of medical school applicants for next year is about 26,000 compared with 22,288 last year, an increase of 16.7 percent. There are approximately 9700 places available in first-year classes. The American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) reports that the number of medical school applicants has risen steadily since draft deferments have become tighter. In 1968 the number of applicants rose to 22,288 from 19,706 in 1967, an increase of 13 percent. The AAMC says that in the years 1965-67 there was an increase of less than 1 percent in medical school applicants. The 1968 total enrollment in medical schools is about 35,700 students.