COMPUTERWORLD

THE NEWSWEEKLY FOR THE COMPUTER COMMUNITY

Weekly Newspaper — Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois
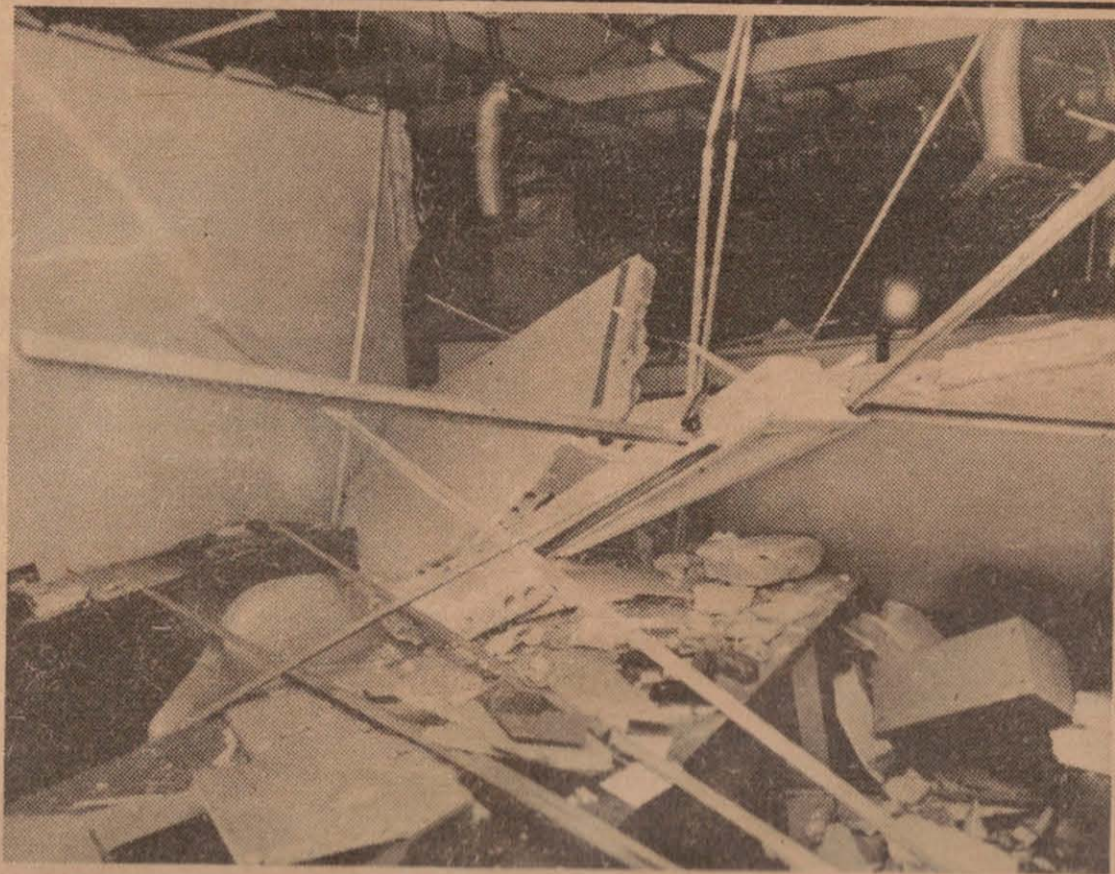
Debris from explosion litters desk in IBM office at 425 Park Avenue in midtown Manhattan. The IBM building was one of the three hit by explosions on Thursday, March 12. [Worldwide Photo]

'Revoluntionary Force' Bombs IBM's Offices

NEW YORK—A bomb blast ripped through the men's room of the eastern regional headquarters of IBM's data processing division here last Thursday causing extensive damage to two offices, but no personal injuries.

The blast, which came at 1:56 a.m. was detonated in a men's room on the 12th floor of the firm's offices at 425 Park Ave. and apparently was part of a coordinated bombing effort which also included blasts at Socony Mobil headquarters and in the Sylvania Electric offices in the General Telephone and Electronics building.

Minutes before the blast all employees at the three buildings had been evacuated after the police received an anonymous telephone call warning them of the bombs. At the time at least eight IBM employees were in the building.

In a letter to the United Press International offices here postmarked one hour before the first of the three explosions, a group called "Revolutionary Force 9" claimed "credit" for the bombings and said that the firms were chosen because of their involvement in defense contract work.

An IBM statement issued after the explosion termed the bombings "deplorable", and said: "For a company to attempt to express its viewpoint by selling or refusing to sell its products to our own government is clearly wrong."

IBM could not at the time give an estimate of the cost of the explosion or a date for reopening offices in the building. All the employees normally housed there have been temporarily transferred to other offices in the New York City area and operations are continuing normally, a spokesman said.

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National Academy Scholars To Investigate Data Banks

By Michael Merritt
CW Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Academy of Sciences has begun an investigation into the extent of computer data banks and their impact on individual freedom and due process of law.

A panel of 23 businessmen, scholars, government officials, lawyers, and computer professionals will act as advisors to the study. Among them are Nicholas Katzenbach, former U.S. attorney general and now a vice-president of IBM; lawyer Ralph Nader; and Anthony G. Oettinger of the National Academy and professor of applied mathematics at Harvard.

The principal investigator is Dr. Alan F. Westin, professor of public law and government at Columbia University, who has put together a research staff to conduct the two-and-a-half year study.

The Russell Sage Foundation is financing the project's $149,500 budget.

Plan of Action

Westin said that one problem concerning regulation of data banks is that "no one has systematic information" on their extent or effect. Though the study is without any official power, it will for the first time provide information to "describe the legal, judicial, administrative, technological, and organizational measures that might be taken to assure the proper balance" between efficient data use and individual rights.

The advisory panel will meet with Westin and his staff late this month to discuss a questionnaire Westin will send to organizations across the country with data banks.

Westin and his staff will then follow up this questionnaire with on-site visits and meetings with the panel to discuss the results.

Later the study group will prepare a draft report to submit to the committee in June, 1971.

One of the purposes of the study will be to determine whether computers are changing the patterns of data collection.

Almost Out of Time

Unregulated and unsupervised use of data banks may make individual privacy and due process virtually meaningless, Westin said in an interview. He asserted that unless safeguards are established within the next five years, the situation may be impossible to regulate.

There are no laws or precedents to support an individual's right to see, contest, change, or eliminate any fact about him in a data bank, Westin noted.

The study will cover hundreds of public and private computerized dossier files, including the FBI's National Crime Information Center, police intelligence files, the Army Intelligence System, credit investigating firms, hospitals, unions, churches, motor vehicle bureaus, and universities.

Westin said: "Almost inevitably, transferring information from a manual file to a computer triggers a threat to civil liberties and privacy, to a man's very humanity, because access is so simple."

Computer Professionals

Of the 23 advisors, only two are computer professionals, speaking strictly. They are Roy Nutt, vice-president of Computer Sciences Corp., and Dr. John R. Pierce, executive director of the research communication sciences division of Bell Telephone Laboratories. There are two scholars with computer credentials—Oettinger, who is also chairman of the computer science and engineering board of the National Academy of Sciences, and Robert M. Fano, Ford Professor of Engineering at MIT, and chairman of the Institute's Committee on Privacy of Information.

Fano said that no matter how strict the technical or legal safeguards, all computer data banks were

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Ohio Bell Agrees to Withdraw Isal Plan

By Ronald A. Frank
CW Technical News Editor

COLUMBUS, Ohio – In a move described as a "major victory for the computer services industry," Ohio Bell Telephone Co. has rescinded a proposal that could have increased costs to time-sharing users by 400%.

The decision to withdraw proposed Information System Access Line (Isal) designations from intrastate lines being utilized by time-sharing customers, was made by Ohio Bell after negotiations with several time-sharing firms that had fought to block the plan.

The Isal proposal was filed last summer by Ohio Bell before the state public utilities commission as part of an overall $80 million rate increase request. Under the proposal, all computer-connected lines being used by time-sharing companies would have been designated as Isal circuits with accompanying rate increases that in some cases ranged as high as 400%.

In anticipation of gaining approval for the Isal concept, Ohio Bell levied increased charges to selected time-share firms including Com-Share, Inc. and GE, under state special assemblage tariff provisions.

These companies together with the Computer Time-Sharing Services Section (CTSS) of Adapso, the U.S. Department of Defense, and other affected companies, objected before the utilities commission and officially intervened to block the rate increase request.

Since the Isal proposal was part of the overall rate increase package, Ohio Bell was unable to collect any of the increased revenue until the entire rate package won commission approval. This approval was contingent on resolving the Isal question to the satisfaction of all parties.

The agreement to withdraw, as filed last week with the commission, included provisions to "delete any reference to Information System Access Lines and . . . "to delete any reference to exchange reclassifications."

The agreement further stated "No party hereto will appeal to the Supreme Court of Ohio or directly or indirectly try to procure a review, rehearing, or reconsideration . . . [of the decision].

In refering to the decision as a victory, John Duffendack, communications manager of Com-Share and chairman of the CTSS communications group, said: "Although this was a local issue, the action by Ohio Bell cannot but help influence future decisions by Bell companies in other states."

He added that the effect of the decision will be to eliminate the

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Afips Changes Mind, Will Work for Computer Year

By Drake Lundell
CW New York Bureau

NEW YORK – The major computer organizations now appear to be joining with ACM over the issue of a National Computer Year, despite earlier indications of non-support for the idea.

Although Afips earlier told CW [CW, Feb. 11, 18] that it did not plan to send a representative to the initial coordinating conference for the proposed National Computer Year, the organization now "will definitely be represented" at the meeting, a spokesman told CW recently.

Whether the Afips participation would be active or merely on an observer status could not be learned. A meeting of the Afips board at the Spring Joint Computer Conference will probably discuss the issue and decide whether its representative would be official or not.

The Afips spokesman also said that constituent members of Afips would be "encouraged" to participate in the planning for the year. These include the

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Peace Group Bombs IBM

The Data Processing Division operates an in-house computer center on the 10th floor of the same building, but it was unaffected by the explosion even though water damage from burst pipes was relatively heavy in the building.

The Revolutionary Force 9 letter to UPI, quoted verbatim, stated: "IBM, Mobile, and GTE are enemies of all life. In 1969, IBM made $250 million, Mobile $150 million, and GTE $140 million for U.S. 'defense con- tracts' - profits made from the suffering and deaths of human beings. All three profit not only from death in Vietnam, but also from Amerikan imperialism.

"They profit from racis oppression of black, Puerto Rican, and other minority colonies outside America from the suffering and death of men in Amerikan army, from sexism, from the exploitation and degredition of employees forced into lives of anti-human work, from the pollution and destruction of our environment."

Statement From IBM

"We believe the bombings, which apparently are a protest against the Vietnam war, are deplorable. The war, of course, is a matter of great concern to everyone and has had a terrible effect on our nation. Under our system, however, the way for individuals to oppose the war is not through anarchy or violence, but through the orderly and democratic proceess available to all.

"For a company to attempt to express its viewpoint by selling or refusing to sell its products to our own government is clearly wrong. A corporation cannot establish foreign policy— our representative government quite properly has that responsibility.

"The IBM Company is a defense contractor, although this represents only a modest amount of total IBM business. We intend to continue to respond to requests for bids from the government in any area where we believe we have competence."