In the same paper the A.L.R.C. chairman outlined the remarkable developments in information technology which will render ready and inexpensive access to government (and other) information a practicable responsibility in the years to come. Citing the U.S. Privacy Study Commission report, *Personal Privacy in an Information Society*, he pointed out that the speed with which changes in information technology have come upon us and the increasing speed with which new changes are occurring (most of it beyond the understanding of ordinary laymen) remove the "time cushion" that used to be present between scientific innovations and the need for law reform. Within 25 years, according to the U.S. report, we have witnessed:

- maximum processing speed increase over 50 thousand fold;
- reliability increase over 1,000 fold;
- physical volume reduced over 100,000 fold;
- cost per operation, i.e. price performance, reduced over 100,000 fold.

The self-same technology which creates problems of difficulties for privacy protection also creates the realistic opportunity of ready, inexpensive access to the huge and growing bulk of government-held information. Perhaps computers, satellites and the photocopier will ensure that democracy can cope.

N.Z. Developments

"The villas and chapels where
I learned with little labour,
The way to love my fellow man
And hate my next-door neighbour."
G. K. Chesterton, *The World State.*

The Wellington District Law Society Newspaper Council *Brief* (July 1978) announces the endorsement by the Society of a proposal advanced by Professor D. L. Mathieson for a new structure for law reform in New Zealand. Professor Mathieson is Professor of Law at the Victoria University of Wellington. His paper was put forward in the context of the current New Zealand debate about the reorganisation of law reform in that country. According to *Brief*, the memorandum criticises the present law reform machinery and suggests the establishment of a "small full-time commission comprising a commissioner, his deputy, five or six research officers and adequate secretarial staff". Professor Mathieson has suggested that the Commissioner should be given a very high status and should be a judge of the Supreme Court serving for three to five years on the Commission. Ad hoc committees should be appointed to consider particular topics. The Wellington Society Sub-committee considered that the proposals could be implemented and "would represent an improvement on the present system". In New Zealand, law reform is currently achieved largely through a series of part-time committees. The Wellington report concludes:

> "The proposals would seem to retain the best features of the present system with its high level of involvement of experienced practitioners and competent academics. At the same time it would give status to the work of law reform and ensure more effective access to Parliament for law reform measures."

The same theme was taken up in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Courts (Mr. Justice Beattie, Chairman) which has become available in the last quarter. The Commissioners report in favour of the establishment of a permanent Law Reform Commission in New Zealand. The present system is outlined and the arguments for and against the part-time organisation of law reform are collected. A review of overseas law reform experience is set out. The Royal Commissioners then state their conclusions:

> "It is of overriding importance to ensure that the machinery of law reform is widely representative of all facets of the public interest with no one person, such as the commissioner himself, being placed in a position of too great an influence. We trust that . . . our report will assist those who ultimately make a decision on the desirability of creating a permanent Law Reform Commission. Conceding we have not heard full debate on this matter, we believe that a Law Reform Commission should be established in a form suitable for New Zealand. Whether or not any changes are made, we strongly recommend that there should immediately be made available to the Law Reform Committees increased assistance by way of research facilities and law drafting."

The recommendation on the establishment of a New Zealand Law Reform Commission is doubtless under consideration in the general review of law reform machinery which was

announced in the middle of 1978. Meanwhile, 240 other recommendations of the Beattie Commission are also under study. These range from recommendations on:

- abolition of the right of appeal to the Privy Council (not to be done "lightly" and only to be done on the basis that it will be beneficial to the New Zealand judicial system and following an enlargement of the Court of Appeal of New Zealand),
- the reconstitution of the Supreme Court as the "High Court",
- the reconstitution of Magistrates' Courts as a judicial District Court,
- the reorganisation of criminal and civil business between the High Court and District Court,
- the establishment of a Family Court and of a Judicial Commission.

One interesting suggestion is that the Judicial Commission should have the power and duty to investigate complaints concerning the conduct of judges (short of removal) and the training of new members of the Bench. It is suggested that "all judges should visit penal institutions soon after their appointment and from time to time thereafter". The adoption of modern principles of court management and judicial administration is suggested and consumer monitoring of the system of justice by boards or committees formed on a district basis is specifically proposed.

Particularly refreshing is the very practical section on "The Courts and the People". Amongst the recommendations here are:

- provision of an Information Desk in a prominent place in the entrance to every court building;
- special training in public relations for court staff;
- education for school children and the general public;
- more flexible hours for court sittings;
- provision of interpreter services for Maori, Polynesian and other ethnic communities;
- the use of plain English in court, including in the framing of charges;
- (by majority) wigs and gowns to be retained in the High Court and Court of Appeal and the simple black gown to be worn in the new District Court by the presiding judge;
- redesign of court buildings and court rooms;
- establishment of a Suitors' Fund and provision of greater legal aid.

Everyone interested in the reform of the administration of justice should secure a copy of this important report. It ranges widely but shows a sound practical approach to law reform. It looks at the court through the eyes of the ordinary citizen. The A.L.R.C. is paying special attention to the suggested revision of penalties under the criminal law of New Zealand, in connection with its recently received reference on Sentencing reform.

Privacy Again

> "What infinite heart's ease
> must kings neglect that private men enjoy!"
> Shakespeare, *Henry V*, IV, 1, 256.

A number of national and international moves towards privacy protection have occurred in the last quarter. The debate concerning the declaration of pecuniary and other interests by Members of Parliament and Public Servants continues to occupy State Parliaments and at a federal level the Committee inquiring into Public Duty and Private Interest (Chairman: Sir Nigel Bowen). The Federal Public Service Board is reported to be opposed to a system of compulsory registration of such interests. Instead it favours a "declaration system" to include Defence Force personnel and possibly judges, members of tribunals, magistrates, statutory office holders and the staff of M.P.s. In rejecting the compulsory registration, the Board has asserted that such a system would "make inroads into the privacy of individuals and possibly their families". A similar point was made by the Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, in answering a question asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bowen. On 14 September 1978, Mr. Fraser told the House of Representatives:

> ". . . At this particular time there are many women within the Australian community who,