The Executive Computer/Peter H. Lewis

Why the Privacy Issue Will Never Go Away

spending habits are marketing tool. simply too attractive a Data bases of people's

overnight computer runs on a mainframe," said Charles W. Stryker, president of Trinet Development Corporation offered, then with vided the data for Marketplace: Business, a America Inc. of Parsippany, N.J., which proisting of American business that the Lotus T'S astonishing the things you can do on a desktop computer in five minutes, which five years ago would have taken BURLINGAME, Calif

Trinet America and its parent, American Business Information Inc. of Omaha, subsequently brought out their own versions of Marketplace: Business, called Lists-on-Disk for I.B.M. personal computers and compati-

executives; information on ownership and estimated or actual revenues. Using Lists-onthe number of employees, the key purchasing description of the primary line of business, businesses, including name and address, a Business Lists-on-Disk, which costs \$750 for a year's license, contains general factual information on 9.2 million private and public phone numbers for, say, all the advertising get accurate names, addresses, contacts and Disk, a marketing company would be able to St. Louis, or all the accounting

the same time it canceled its plans to intro-

computer systems and stealing docu

duce Marketplace: Households, a CD-ROM product that contained names, ages, addresses, marital status, estimated income range, buying habits and other data on 120 million consumer credit data gathered by Equifax inc., one of the nation's big credit bureaus. But such programs will not go away, becitizens, based on United States Census and

customers with laser beams instead of shotcause personal increasing chances of success. guns, saving on production costs and greatly disks allow small businesses to contact their computers and CD-ROM

using Marketplace guidelines, and, as quickly as one could say Big Brother, list thousands of names of real people who most could create a model of its ideal customer customers most likely to buy their products small companies and individuals the same closely fit the model an advertising flyer directly to the potential access to consumer marketing information ong enjoyed. A small business hoping to send that bigger and wealthier companies have Marketplace: Households promised to give

ices, and the Legion of Doom, a loosely knit group of young computer enthusiasts who have been accused by various law-enforcesionals for Social Responsibility. The conference, which ended on March 28, attracted tween personal computers and privacy continued at the First Conference on Computers, tion, TRW Information Systems and Servdiverse as the Federal Bureau of Investigaabout 400 participants from organizations as sored by a group called Computer Profes-Freedom and Privacy, a meeting here sponment agencies of such activities as breaking Even though Marketplace: Households is ead, the debate over the relationship be-

Washington office of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.

styles program at SRI International of Menlo Park, Calif., a market research and consultmoving into a world of much more specialized niches and personalized products," said marketing lists is also undeniable. "We're pressure on businesses to find good consuming concern. "We're in a more slowly grow-ing consumer economy, so there is more Tom Mandel, director of the values and lifeing consumer economy, so there is Businesses' desire for such highly targeted

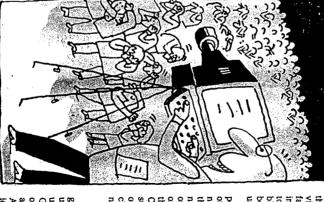
companies agreed to provide information beyond verification of basic data. For those low Page phone books, and called each one, Mr. Stryker said. He said 85 percent of the can Business Information contacted all the Households and Lists-on-Disk is that Ameri-Trinet provided estimates based on industry that declined to provide revenue figures, A.B.I. culled business listings from 5,000 Yelbusinesses to verify data before listing them. A key difference between Marketplace:

Households were not notified. Your name, dear reader, was probably in the Market-place data base, which was drawn from ing listed, people listed in Marketplace: Households were not notified. Your name, card or a mortgage, or filling out a warranty name. Rather, you provided the information bly did not consent to the inclusion of your households. And chances are that you proba-Equifax's datá base of 80 million American

ments and codes.
"We are going to confront many more debates like Lotus Marketplace in the years ahead," said Marc Rotenberg, director of the

averages for the number of employees. While businesses were contacted about be-

Executives of Lotus, based in Cambridge



ingly vigorous protests from consumers. More than 30,000 people, in what may have been the first grass-roots, personal computceled the program after months of increas-ingly vigorous protests from consumers. to voice their concerns that Marketplace: er-based consumer protest, contacted Lotus Households represented an abuse of

> between the needs of businesses and individ-uals' concerns over privacy." ble one. We are concerned about the balance to stop development was a socially responsiinformation bureau. "We believe the decision fax, a billion-dollar multinational credit and vice president for corporate affairs of Equi-"We don't have any plans to get back

names in secondary mailing lists so long as they are given the option of removing their names from the list. The process of removing one's name is called "opting out." But critics of Lotus's Marketplace: Households noted changes would have to await the creation of a new disk. sumers could not opt out or correct errone-ous information once it was encoded. Such of consumers do not object to the use of their poll commissioned by Equitax, the majority CD-ROM disk, which is not eraseable, that because the program was encoded on a According to a Louis Harris & Associates

uals. One could not ask for information on George Bush, for example. But ask for a list of executive males who earn at least \$200,000 a year, live on the East Coast and carry an American Express card (even if it is just for identification) and prestol: The list would Lotus and Equifax officials said the program was misunderstood. It did not allow users to seek information on specific individinclude George Herbert Walker Bush, age 65

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington.
Alan F. Westin, professor of public law and government at Columbia University in New York, said he expected that "by the year 2000 we will use only consensual data bases." He said he expected that "consumers will be compensated" for the use of their private