Pentium Iii Disturbs Privacy Essay, Research Paper

The recent release of the Intel Pentium III has consumers as well as businesses concerned about the privacy of

the computer world. The controversial issue is a feature in the Pentium III chip known as a Processor Serial

Number or PSN. It identifies individual machines connected to the internet by way of a unique number

embedded in the chip. According to Intel the PSN will be used to identify users in electronic commerce and

other net-based applications. The PSN will be used as access control for questionable material on the internet.

Intel also admits thought that when used in conjunction with user name and password the PSN can be used by

web sites to ?identify useres when conduting e-commerce, or setting up member only chatrooms.

The chip PSN can also be used in association with other individual identifying data to trace email, build

databases of user habits, and monitor usage of copyrighted material. The PSN will help curb computer theft

says Intel but others disagree. They contend that the PSN feature would allow software makers to pierce the

privacy of our computer users. The arguement is not with what the chip was made for but, against what could

be done with it. The software makers would quickly use the PSN to monitor thier costomers behavior and

create databases. With this capability companies can join databases and have access to personal information

without the individual knowing.

So then there needs to be a governing body of people to regulate those companies as to what they can

do with the information the PSN provides. But there is none. Intel said they would rely on the companies to

police themselves, upholding a voluntary code that restricts the amount of information computer companies,

Internet service providers, web sites and telecommunications companies can collect, and how they use it . This

is where people get concerned. What companies do with personal information is very frieghtening to some

internet civil rights activist groups. That is why some of these groups have filed a formal complaint to do away

with or disable the PSN with the Fedral Trade Commision.

Intel spokepersons say that ?they don?t want to? when asked to disable the PSN. Intel insists that the

PSN has value and should be allowed to stay in the Pentium III chip.

The real issue of this debate is the privacy of people. I think that the civil rights groups are right in complaining

about the PSN. Although it is was intentioned for good purpose the fact is that we can not be possitive that the

PSN will be used the correct way all the time. We want this world to be a safe place and rejecting this feature

from Intel is one way that we can assure oursleves that we are doing something to make it stay that way.

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