

*Access to Information*

think it is quite proper that it has taken so long for the bill to appear in its present form because the matter is complex. The federal and provincial jurisdictions were involved and this is a complicating factor.

Sometimes the right to privacy gets in the way of competition and this is a difficulty for the commercial sector where people must be free to do business without giving aid and comfort to their competition.

The whole process seems simple until you get into it. It has involved a great deal of consultation over the years. There have been other attempts to bring forward an access to information and right to privacy bill and we have benefited from earlier studies in the private and public sectors. As well, we have the advantage of seeing how such legislation has worked in some provinces and in other countries.

It would be a great thing if we could pass this bill unanimously this afternoon. Much has been said about the fact that it is not perfect, and there is no doubt that it has its limitations and could be improved. It is important to get it through so we can see it in operation, however. We will be able to see whether the judicial reviews work and whether the commissioner is doing a good job, whether information is as accessible as it should be and if privacy is being protected. The subject has been examined thoroughly by many sectors in the country over the years. Its strength lies in the fact that a parliamentary committee must review the bill in three years' time. By then we will have had a chance to see how it works.

This review is an absolute necessity, Mr. Speaker. It ensures that we will not just forget about the whole subject but will monitor and observe the process and make corrections where necessary. We have to start somewhere, Mr. Speaker, and I feel that we have made a grand beginning.

I am very proud to have had some small part in this process along with an excellent group of parliamentarians. I compliment the government for bringing to fruition something that has been desired by so many people for so long and for recognizing the very good work that preceded the work of the committee. I wish the bill could be approved this afternoon by unanimous consent.

• (1720)

So, Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation in saying that, while I know it will not go through by unanimous consent, unfortunately, I am proud that most of us at least have recognized the need for the bill and the fact that it is really a magnificent beginning.

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on Bill C-43, particularly as it pertains to social insurance numbers. I want to relate to the House, the minister, and to his officials in the gallery, an incident where a citizen of Canada, a constituent of mine, was terribly abused because of misuse of his social insurance number by someone else. I think it would be worth while for the minister to listen to this and realize that sometimes these numbers and government documentation can work against the individual.

One Sunday morning, Mr. Speaker, a university student—studying, coincidentally, computer sciences—came to my door. My family and I were just on our way to church, but I stayed behind to talk to him because I perceived that he was in difficulty. In fact, sir, as I spoke to him I found that he was contemplating suicide. We sat down and spent the rest of the day together. My wife came back from church with the children and he had lunch and dinner with us.

What happened was that he had attended a circus and someone stole his wallet containing his social insurance number, driver's licence and birth certificate. The thief began to use this young man's identity and used it for a number of years. He took employment in this university student's name so that come income tax time my constituent had the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Rompkey) telling him that he had not remitted all his taxes because he had worked for this company, that company and the other company. Of course, the young man said "I did not work there at all". "It does not matter, we have your T4 slips with your social insurance number, therefore you must pay." So he paid tax for four years on income that he did not earn.

In addition to that, the thief used this man's identity all across Canada. He bounced cheques in every province so that the RCMP had a file on him and were looking for him. This individual also went down to the United States, committed a crime in Texas, and the FBI had a file on him. The province of Ontario suspended the student's driver's licence because this individual had committed so many traffic offences that he had used up all his points.

The student came to me because he had graduated from university and had applied for a job where confidentiality was required. The prospective employer had made the usual check and found out that the applicant had a criminal record. This individual who was using the young man's identification had stolen a car, been caught and gone to jail in my constituent's name, using his social insurance number. How shocking for the young man to find out that he had just graduated from university and had a criminal record, was wanted by police for bouncing cheques, and could not drive a car, all because of this individual using his identification and social insurance number.

I wrote all this down in a statement, the young man swore to it, and we began our investigation. I went to the police in Hamilton and found that indeed he had reported his wallet stolen, so we began to look from there. I came back to Ottawa and said that we must give this man a new social insurance number so that we can separate him from the individual who is using his number fraudulently. I went to the central records of the department which produced the social insurance number, and what do you think they told me? They said: "We cannot issue another number to your constituent; the computer is not programmed that way". "Well, what are we supposed to do", I said. They said they would seek legal advice from the legal officers within the department. They then called me back and said the only way they can issue a new social insurance number