

extort or extract some desired action. A government which has an all-dominating presence can manipulate its citizens.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that a Russian can best suggest the words to describe a society in which all computers are interlinked and an all-knowing government dominates its citizens. In his book, *Cancer Ward*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian Nobel Prize winner writes:

As every man goes through life he fills in a number of forms for the record, each containing a number of questions . . . There are thus hundreds of little threads radiating from every man, millions of threads in all.

If these threads were suddenly to become visible, the whole sky would look like a spider's web, and, if they materialized as rubber, buses, trams and even people would all lose the ability to move, and the wind would be unable to carry torn-up newspaper or autumn leaves along the streets of the city. They are not visible, they are not material, but every man is constantly aware of their existence . . . Each man, permanently aware of his own invisible threads, materially develops a respect for people who manipulate the threads.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn describes accurately the dilemma of modern man in our societies. Each time we give up a bit of information about ourselves to the government, we give up some of our freedom. For the more the government or any institution knows about us, the more power it has over us. When the government knows all of our secrets, we stand naked before official power. Stripped of our privacy, we lose our rights and privileges.

● (1612)

I suggest that these are not merely abstract musings but a serious concern about the future of modern society. A single identifying number such as a social insurance number would give individuals untold opportunities to interconnect various computer terminals, each one possessing different bits of information about us.

In conclusion, I hope the government will take into account some of the solutions I recommend. In Canada, for the sake of individual privacy something must be done about the uncontrolled expansion of the use of social insurance numbers. Instead of encouraging surreptitiously the evolution of the social insurance number to the status of the exclusive identifier of individuals, the government should take heed of the advice of its own task force on computers and privacy. Its authors, including the present under-secretary of state for external affairs, Mr. Gotlieb, stated, and I quote:

It is possible that a *de facto* personal identification number will develop in Canada, either through an ever-widening use of the social insurance number (despite its limitations) or indirectly through credit card and bank account numbers. However, it is important to ensure that a single identifying number should not be adopted in Canada directly or indirectly, without a full examination and public debate on its merits and consequences.

The government should introduce legislation regarding the social insurance number to prevent further extension and to place constraints on its use.

I put forward several suggestions to the minister, who is in the House today, which might govern the use of social insurance numbers in Canada. The use of social insurance numbers should be governed by the following principles. First, the uses of social insurance numbers should be limited to those neces-

sary for carrying out requirements imposed by the federal government.

Second, federal agencies and departments should not require or promote the use of social insurance numbers except to the extent that they have a specific legislative mandate from parliament.

Third, parliament should be sparing in imposing mandatory use of a social insurance number and should impose it only after full and careful consideration preceded by well advertised hearings which elicit substantial public participation. Such consideration should weigh carefully the pros and cons of any proposed use and should pay particular attention to whether effective safeguards have been applied.

Fourth, when social insurance numbers are used in instances which do not conform to the three foregoing principles, no individual should be coerced into providing his social insurance number; nor should his social insurance number be used without consent.

Fifth, an individual should be fully and fairly informed of his rights and responsibilities relative to uses of social insurance numbers, including the right to disclose his social insurance number when he deems it to be in his interest to do so.

These are principles laid down by a comparative study of the social security number in the United States. We can take some direction from these principles, and I recommend them very strongly to the minister.

Having regard to these principles, I suggest that the minister make specific recommendations based upon them. Such recommendations would include the following. First, individuals should have the right to refuse to disclose their social insurance numbers to any organization which does not have specific authority provided by federal statute. Individuals should have recourse to the courts if this right is denied.

Second, any future legislation dealing with social insurance numbers should be preceded by full and careful consideration and well advertised hearings which elicit public participation.

Third, in order to prevent the social insurance number from becoming an employee identification number, a patient identification number, a student identification number, a customer identification number or the primary organizing element in any non-federal organization, any organization or person should be unable to use the social insurance number of an individual unless the individual gives his informed consent.

Fourth, legislation should prohibit the use of social insurance numbers for promotional or commercial purposes.

I think these principles and recommendations which I have set out should be adopted by the government and should form the basic guidelines for Canadian legislation. Like many Canadians, I feel that the expansion of the social insurance number and its evolution toward a single identifying number are not beneficial to the protection of privacy. Further examination and public debate are required. In the meantime, some concrete steps by the government are called for in order that Canadians will not be presented with a *fait accompli*.