for thefts above $200 if the Crown proceeds by way of indictment and up to two years if the theft is below $200. That is one option which the government could follow.

But failing support for this option, perhaps the provinces could be persuaded to amend their property and civil rights laws to include computer theft as a trespassing violation. When I posed this question to the minister, he indicated that the government was prepared to take action and that it was prepared, if necessary, to introduce legislation. Too much time has passed already. Canadians are entitled to know what action the government is prepared to take, and they have a right to see this bill put before Parliament without further delay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Joyal (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) for raising this issue, and more specifically for the manner in which he raised it, because it is of such interest that it departs greatly from the party lines which generally dictate our debates in the House. He has raised the much more important issue of protecting our databanks as well as the services which Treasury Board must provide to store the information which the various departments need to carry out their duties under the constitution and their respective acts of Parliament.

The Treasury Board is responsible for the administrative policies affecting databanks, including the protection of computers. During the special audit of the computer operations he carried out in 1977, the Auditor General noticed that the government was more concerned about the protection of its systems than the private sector. The recommendations he made following this audit have been applied to his satisfaction. The hon. member, who was himself minister of state for the Treasury Board a few months ago, is fully aware of the extent to which the board wants to apply the Auditor General's recommendations when they concern security in the public sector.

The RCMP is presently establishing standards covering several security aspects in electronic data processing. In March 1980, only a few months ago, Treasury Board approved the first of these standards which dealt with management and staff. This standard advises against processing sensitive data or furnishing essential services using computers which have other unknown users, as in the case of computers linked to so-called open networks where access is not controlled and where anyone can link up directly through switched lines. It is up to each deputy minister to implement the required safety measures and to ensure the security of data banks. He is the one responsible for deciding the importance of the information and the degree of protection needed in each case by determining among other things what resources will be used to ensure the protection of information, in view of existing risks and possible threats. Furthermore, it is the duty of all departments to make

an assessment of the threat or the risk to security coming from the maintenance of data banks.

The security inspection and assessment group of the RCMP is instructed to give advice, to inspect data processing facilities on the request of the departments and to formulate recommendations to deputy ministers. The latter are then asked to report to the RCMP on the implementation of the recommendations. In turn, the RCMP has to report to Treasury Board on the general conditions of security within government. The security standards on data processing which were developed by the RCMP for Treasury Board are based on the experience of the facilities inspection group which goes back many years, and they represent efficient and sophisticated measurements which allow the government to take advantage of the data processing technology while meeting our concerns in the area of security.

Datapac and Infoswitch are telecommunication services which are offered respectively by Bell Canada and CN-CP Telecommunications. The hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe referred earlier to both systems when he mentioned the offences made by the students in New York. Those two networks are intended specially for computer systems. Subscribers can send messages from computer terminals through transmission lines to terminals belonging to other subscribers. That is known as an open user group. There is also what is known as a closed group where a set group of users only has access to the network in order to preserve its private character. Because several users share the cost of those installations, those services save from 50 per cent to 75 per cent of transmissions costs. It is therefore obviously financially advantageous to subscribe to those commercial services.

The system known as the closed group—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Joyal: Mr. Speaker, I shall send the hon. member additional notes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not allowed during this debate.

● (2210)

[*English*]

FOREST FIRES—PLANS TO ALLEVIATE HARDSHIP SUFFERED BY VICTIMS

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on a question I raised on May 27 regarding the drought in the prairie provinces and regarding assistance that, I hoped would come from the federal government to producers of cattle and grain in western Canada at a time when it was very badly needed.

Part of my question concerned a press release—or a cabinet document or a memorandum—from Regina which said there was not much the government could do to assist producers in