

Computer Crime

whole area of computer technology and abuses in that area. The Hon. Member who introduced the Bill gave a number of examples of great abuses of the system where people go into other data banks, take out information, and the owner of the information has no recourse.

● (1805)

For example, if someone was to go in and destroy a computer disk or computer tape, he could not be prosecuted for the destruction of information, he could only be prosecuted for the actual physical destruction of the tape or disk. I think this is very wrong. In this day and age information is power; it creates wealth for the companies or individuals who assemble the information. That translates into a lot of dollars being involved in computer crime. The Attorneys General of some Provinces estimate there will be some 1,700 cases of computer abuse in Canada this year, and the loss to computer criminals is estimated to be running at some \$100 million in North America alone.

This brings up a very interesting question as to who has the right to information and how it should be used. I think that not only provisions under the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act should be looked at, but I also think that copyright legislation should be looked at as well. One who researches and creates information should have access to copyrights, just as an author would have to a book he has written. It is questionable whether anyone who collects, stores and possibly retrieves information should have a proprietary interest in it, or whether it should actually be a public resource. I think that deserves examination by the House of Commons.

Some quite serious crimes have been committed involving computers. There is the case of a bank employee in the United States who transferred some \$10.2 million to a Swiss bank account in a matter of a few minutes. This shows that people with an expert knowledge of computers are able to commit fraud by abusing the system anywhere in the world. However, the particular problem here in Canada should be dealt with so that these people can be prosecuted by due process, and there should be legislation in effect to protect people who have invested a lot of money in their computer programs. They should not have to put up with people who have the knowledge and technology enabling them to steal through the use of computers. There are also the employees of firms with access to the computer system. If their employer or the individual who owns the computer aggravates them, they can foul up the system and cause great expense to the individual or company who owns the computer.

I do not want to prolong this debate, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to say in conclusion that computer technology and the wrongdoings which go with it are running way ahead of the law. I think it is now time, either by way of this Private Member's Bill as a beginning, or by Government legislation in the very near future, that the law actually caught up with the state of the art in computer technology.

● (1810)

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about Bill C-667 and to commend the Hon. Member for bringing it before the House.

In his remarks the Hon. Member who just spoke—or who read what the Government is supposed to be doing—raised several questions about the legislation, and that is fine. It is one of the purposes of a careful analysis of legislation. I submit, however, that all his questions could be answered adequately in committee.

The subject matter of this Bill is long overdue for debate. The thefts that are taking place in the computer world should not be permitted. It is not fair to prosecute someone for stealing a loaf of bread because he is hungry, and not to amend the Criminal Code so that those who steal thousands of dollars by use of a computer cannot be prosecuted. The Department of Justice has been working on this for months and months. Surely it is not beyond the capacity of legal officers in that Department to bring in a Bill that satisfies the demands of modern society.

The points raised by the Member who spoke for the Government are not arguments against sending the Bill to committee, Mr. Speaker, but, rather, are arguments for sending it there.

I know that the time for debate on this Bill has been extended to 6.18 p.m. I should like to submit that when someone deliberately devises a way of stealing by computer, it causes worry for people who have money in a bank, for instance, where computers are used. Indeed, computers are being used to guard the secrets of our lives, and if someone has access to them because he has found a key to the formula and uses it, that is theft.

Some companies have spent thousands and thousands of dollars to find oil in various parts of Canada and the information is all on computer. Now, someone else can get that information scotfree if they can tune in to the right channel. That is theft, Mr. Speaker, and should be treated as such. If my credit card is stolen the loss is probably about 15 cents, but that card can be used to make purchases worth hundreds of dollars. Liability for the charges incurred was changed in that case, and the same should be done with computers. The trouble is not just with stealing the formula for the computer; the value of the information secured by that means or the money obtained from a bank by the same means is a major consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): I should have that motion in writing.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that the motion that the Bill be referred had already been made and seconded by someone on the other side.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the point is well taken. The motion has been put. I move that the question be now put.