

*Adjournment Debate*

constituency borders on the second largest province in Canada in population, that is Quebec, the two central provinces, I do not think that either of the two provinces should, for all time, have a veto. Two hundred years from now the bulk of the population of Canada might be in Alberta or in British Columbia. How much of the population of the United States was in California, Oregon and Washington 200 years ago? This is something we must consider. When we resume debate on this matter tomorrow, I hope to go into some specifics and more detail.

● (2200)

May I call it ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

## PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

### COMPUTERS—USE BY GOVERNMENT OF DATABANKS

**Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, on May 9 of this year I asked the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) about an incident where an attempt was made by students of a New York private school, the Dalton school, to enter 21 Canadian computer databanks. As we all know, this work was in fact the work of Grade VIII students. While the damage done was not as extensive as originally thought, although considerable damage was done in some of the databanks they were able to enter, the students were able to enter at least two databanks. If clever grade school students could break into computer databanks with ease, what would computer professionals be capable of doing?

To make matters worse, at least two databanks approached by these students were federal government databanks. Luckily the students were unable to gain access to the computers and no information was destroyed. In response to my question the President of the Treasury Board indicated that no government databanks with sensitive information have dial-in access. However, sensitivity of information is in the eye of the beholder. I asked the minister for a list and a description of those databanks with dial-in access so that the people of Canada could be sure the information contained in government databanks is not sensitive.

I received that list and it indicates that among the databanks included in Datapac is the computer of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It concerns me that this computer is included in Datapac, a system with dial-in access, particularly if it contains private information about veterans such as medical information supplied for disability claims. I ask the parliamentary secretary or the minister to provide me with informa-

tion about this databank and to take steps to protect the information contained in it, if it contains any sensitive data.

In the same context, in the Infoswitch system the Department of Employment and Immigration has a computer databank which is the field operational support system for immigration. I should like to know—and I think the House is entitled to know—the substance of that databank. Does it include information which properly should be held as personal and confidential? Are there threats to the personal privacy of individuals on the basis of information being held in that databank?

If the government feels it is necessary to keep certain databanks connected to Infoswitch or Datapac, it should take greater care for the security of its information. Encryption devices currently available at reasonable prices would protect information contained in databanks. I have been told that the government does not use these devices. I think their use would go a long way toward stopping computer vandals and more sophisticated computer thieves. I should like to ask if the minister has any plans to introduce such devices.

Also the government should help in developing standards for the private enterprise to protect its computer information. The Dalton school incident earlier this year showed that private computers were more vulnerable than government ones. Although regulation may not be necessary, at least the government could help to provide voluntary standards to assist private industry to cope with this problem.

Equally disturbing as the lack of technical protection against computer theft is the lack of legal protection. Activities similar to those of the Dalton school students are being reported with increasing frequency. Just recently, however, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled, in a similar case involving a student at the University of Alberta, that the unauthorized use of computers is not illegal. Indeed its logic was airtight. In matters of theft from telecommunications equipment, it is impossible to convict someone unless the equipment used is defined as a communications device; clearly computers are not.

● (2205)

I should stress that it is not the courts that I criticize. They were asked to interpret legislation which was obsolete and inadequate. I address my comments to the government, for Canada truly needs new legislation on this matter. Many hon. members will be aware that just last month the Canadian Bar Association sent a telegram to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) imploring him to take immediate steps to fill in the gap created by the Supreme Court decision. According to the association, the telegram, which was co-signed by the Canadian Information Processing Society and the Canadian Law Information Council had this to say:

The difficulty of imposing penalties on those who make unauthorized use of computer facilities puts at risk the security of commercial and government operations.

If the Criminal Code redefined communications facilities to include computers, the penalties would have a definite sting. Currently, the code provides for up to ten years imprisonment