

Computer Crime

been established in recent years, wherein the past such concepts, let alone actual laws, did not exist. Likewise, new criminal law concepts may be needed, rather than attempting to guide the future with tools of a bygone era. We are faced with a challenge. Let us do it right.

I think it is clear that the issues involved go beyond that of computers, computer abuse and criminal law. Criminal laws may need to be enacted to address the abuses perpetrated to or with computers and their related entities. However, because of the information implications, broader questions must also be asked and an attempt made to answer them within the entire framework of society. We should not juggle a part of an intricately woven and inter-connected economic system without knowing the effects which it may have on other parts of the system, existing institutions and law.

Of course, I am not saying that the Government should not examine this area carefully with a view to introducing a Bill containing amendments addressing the problems of abuse of computer systems. However, realizing the broader implications and the need for integration and consistency, we must also study aspects of the broader question: the use, misuse and abuse of information.

Many American experts in the field of computers are of the opinion that their computer crime statutes have only dealt with half of the issues. We in Canada have an opportunity to address all the issues in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner. Let us not rush to enact legislation which does not deal with all of the relevant issues. Hon. Members of this House should have the benefit of the most complete information available. In addition to the study just mentioned, the Canadian Government has been consulting with experts in this field, not only in Canada and the United States, but also it has had contact with experts in Europe. Of course, consultations with Canadian associations involved in the computer and information industries are continuing. Let us not proceed prematurely with this Bill. Let us wait, but only for a short time, until this accumulation of knowledge and experience is complete. Let us not consider this Bill now but rather consider its proposals in conjunction with the work previously mentioned.

In conclusion, I do want to thank the Hon. Member for the Bill which he has proposed to the House this afternoon, and for his thoughtful presentation.

Mr. Althouse: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since we have not been able to complete the hour for this part of the debate, I would move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Dauphin (Mr. Lewycky), under Standing Order 8(4)(a), that the debate continue so that we can complete the hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): May the Chair please have the motion in writing.

Pursuant to Standing Order 8(4)(a), Mr. Althouse, seconded by Mr. Anguish, moved:

That the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of adjournment for the purpose of—

The Hon. Member for Welland (Mr. Parent) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Parent: Mr. Speaker, I should like to call quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. When the Speaker puts a question to the House, the procedure should not be interrupted. The motion continues:

—continuing consideration of Bill C-667, an Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act in respect of computer crime, on the second reading stage.

Will those Hon. Members who object to the motion please rise in their places?

And fewer than 25 Members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The motion is deemed to have been adopted.

• (1800)

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I believe the seconder of the motion was the Hon. Member for Dauphin (Mr. Lewycky), not myself.

I find some difficulty understanding why the Liberal Party would not want the New Democratic Party's position on the record concerning this very important Private Members' Bill, Bill C-667, introduced by the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty). It raises a very interesting question in an area which has not been given a great deal of attention by this federal Government. It is an Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act in respect of computer crime.

This is an area, Mr. Speaker, where technology has gone far in advance of legislation in Canada. We in the NDP agree with the Bill in that there is a need to update the laws as they relate to computers and the information technology which exists today. Today in Canada we have very little ability to prosecute people who participate in what I think Members of both Opposition Parties would view as criminal activity. I commend the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe for bringing in this Private Member's Bill because it points out a need. I also agree to some extent with the speaker from the Government who said that the Bill does not go far enough. I think there are many areas not covered here, and there are a few basic points which I would like to bring out in the few moments I have.

The proposed legislation would include unauthorized copying of computer information as a form of theft. The Criminal Code definition of property would also be extended expressly to include computer data and software. Other new provisions would make misuse, alteration or destruction of computer programs or information by unauthorized personnel an offence punishable under the mischief section of the Criminal Code. The Canada Evidence Act would be amended so as to permit computer print-outs to be treated as original documents for use as evidence in the courts.

Now, I know Private Members' Bills very rarely pass, Mr. Speaker, but I hope that if this Bill does not pass this afternoon, the Government will take very serious account of the shortcomings of the legislation in place in dealing with the