

comments short so that as many members as possible may speak this afternoon.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that I will stay within the time limit allowed me.

The Toronto *Star* of September 24, 1978, refers to the Human Rights Commissioner in an article headlined "I am Appalled." The Canadian Press story from Ottawa begins as follows:

Parliament will be asked to deal with alleged misuse of social insurance numbers, says Human Rights Commissioner Gordon Fairweather.

The government's own Human Rights Commissioner has indicated that he is totally dissatisfied with the way the government is acting to protect personal privacy and the abuse of the social insurance number.

In the time I have remaining, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make three or four points. This government has stressed time and time again that its justification for the increasing practice of numbering citizens and for the proliferation of the social insurance number is that it is to be used as a control mechanism to protect the public against fraud and against the misuse of public funds. In some ways this is justifiable, Mr. Speaker. We can understand that it is necessary to ensure that Canadians do not abuse public programs. I would argue, however, that the social insurance number itself may well present a mechanism that can be used by people intent on committing fraud.

I refer the House to statements made before the McDonald inquiry as reported in the *Calgary Herald* on October 26, 1978. The article on the subject reads in part as follows:

When RCMP Assistant Commissioner H. Jensen gave evidence to the McDonald commission into RCMP wrongdoing in June this year, he stated that 50 per cent of all cases of false pretenses made use of SIN cards. The problem, he implied, was the lack of security surrounding the SIN.

He illustrated this with the case of a Calgary man who had 109 SIN cards, 59 UIC claims, and a monthly income of \$33,000.

He told of a Montreal duo who used 60 SIN cards over a period of two months to collect \$32,867 from the UIC and who had projected earnings of half a million dollars from their gainful unemployment had they not slipped up.

He related the tale of the Winnipeg man who parlayed 25 SIN cards into \$92,000 over 4½ years.

If we allow the social insurance number to be used increasingly as a citizen identification card, the credibility that goes with this card will also be useful as a mechanism for people intent on committing fraud to fulfil their objectives.

The use of the social insurance number within government, even without the direct linkage to government data banks, facilitates improper access into the personal files of individual Canadians. At this time last year parliament devoted a great deal of time to discussing the ability of people posing as chartered accountants or claiming to be unlicensed private investigators to get access to the personal and confidential income tax returns of individual Canadians. Someone posing as a chartered accountant could ring the taxation branch and say that his client has misplaced his income tax return, give the social insurance number and get information over the phone. In this way information was given to unauthorized

Supply

individuals without the individual about whose return the inquiry was made being informed. This was done despite the sanctions in the law forbidding it. The use of the social insurance number as a computerized filing number throughout the government facilitates this sort of invasion of privacy.

Let me conclude, Mr. Speaker, with this one observation. We as legislators have the responsibility to act in a conscious and deliberate way. If we are to make changes which will profoundly affect all Canadians, we have a responsibility to ensure that those decisions are made after careful deliberation in parliament, after broad public discussion and after parliament has actually made the decision to go ahead with the particular program.

That was the recommendation of the 1972 computers and privacy report commissioned by this government. That is the nature of the motion before the House today, and it is the policy that should be adopted by the government. If the government looks seriously at the motion before the House today, it should agree that it is one which commends itself to all Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It being five o'clock, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 58(10) and the agreement made earlier this day to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of all business of supply now before the House, including the bill based on Supplementary Estimates (A).

* * *

SUPPLY

MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

Hon. Judd Buchanan (President of the Treasury Board) moved:

That Supplementary Estimates (A), 1978-79, laid upon the Table, Wednesday, November 8, 1978, be concurred in.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: On division.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Buchanan thereupon moved that Bill C-25, for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 1979, be read the first time and be printed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

Mr. Buchanan thereupon moved that Bill C-25, for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 1979, be read the second time and referred to the committee of the whole.