

understand Canadians' worries and misgivings about the extension of the social insurance number. It is not surprising that they have treated this issue so cavalierly. It is no wonder they refuse to have a debate on this issue.

In light of the government's obvious insensitivity to the issue, and aware that the extension of SIN troubles many Canadians, my colleagues and I have decided to use this allotted day to move a motion which will allow parliamentary debate on the use of social insurance numbers and to force the government to introduce guidelines to limit their use.

What are the uses of SIN? My first area of concern touches the extension in the use of the social insurance number. Without any fanfare, without great fuss, without even a word of debate, the social insurance number has evolved secretly and slowly into a *de facto* national identification card. Its use has progressed slowly but surely in both the public sector and the private sector. Let us look at some of the present day uses of social insurance numbers. Let us draw some attention finally to this innocuous number that has begun to pervade our lives and insinuate itself into all aspects of our existence.

In 1964, the social insurance number saw the light of day. Created for the purposes of the Canada Pension Plan, the number was to be limited to social security programs. Members of parliament who enacted the law thought they were merely providing a means to administer a new program. Any suspicions of other uses for the card, any suspicions that the card would become a national ID, were allayed by the repeated assurances of the then prime minister and his colleagues who claimed insistently that the numbers would not become national identity cards.

Fifteen years later, how do these guarantees stand up to reality? Is the social insurance number still limited to social security programs? Let us see.

In the federal government, the social insurance number has become a key registration and administrative number for numerous programs and various departments. It is used for unemployment insurance programs; for taxpayer identification; for identification of all federal employees; for registration of all purchasers of Canada Savings Bonds; for the military number of all Canadian Forces personnel; for gun registration with the Solicitor General; for permits to hunt in certain areas of Quebec. In addition, it is used as a prime identifier in computer banks in different agencies, varying from use in the computers of the external affairs department to its utilization in the computers of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation.

Not only is the social insurance number pervasive in the workings of the federal government, but provincial governments have adopted the social insurance number as one of their own. For example, the school systems of Saskatchewan and Ontario use social insurance numbers for record keeping for students in senior grades. Motor vehicle drivers' records in Quebec and hunting licences in Manitoba are recorded by social insurance numbers. Recently, Mr. Speaker, the federal government and the P.E.I. government reached an agreement to register all newborn babies in that province.

Social Insurance Numbers

As hon. members can see, the social insurance number has become, without parliamentary authority or approval, an identification card within the government and, if I may say so, within the different levels of government. The assurances of successive Liberal ministers have been as hollow as much of their thinking on policy.

But the use of the social insurance number does not stop at the government. In recent years, a new phenomenon can be easily detected. The social insurance number has become more commonly used in the private sector. Youngsters playing pee-wee hockey are asked for social insurance numbers for the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association computer. A Winnipeg ballet school uses social insurance numbers. Banks are asking companies to provide social insurance numbers before they will process payrolls of the companies. Grocery stores, insurance companies, and other private institutions are demanding social insurance numbers as a proof of identification.

As shown by the above enumeration of activities and organizations using social insurance numbers, it is clearly evident that social insurance numbers have gained the status of a *de facto* identification card. The question Canadians are asking themselves is the following: "When did the Canadian people decide to adopt a national identification number?" The answer, Mr. Speaker, is never. There has never been a debate in the House about the desirability of or the necessity for such a system. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this system has been implemented contrary to the assurances given to the Canadian people by the government.

I want to turn now to government promises that have been broken. The extension of the use of the social insurance number and its attainment of the status of national identification has been done surreptitiously and without the consent of the Canadian people. What is interesting, Mr. Speaker, is to examine the replies of different cabinet ministers throughout the years and then match their statements with the facts. Let us start with the numerous assurances given by the government. In a written question on March 9, 1964, the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orikow) asked the minister of national health and welfare:

Has the registration proposed for all Canadians been considered solely for social security purposes—

The minister answered:

It has been developed solely in connection with social security programs.

● (1602)

The right hon. member for Prince Albert was pressing the then minister of national health and welfare, presently the government House leader, on the future uses of the social insurance number. He wanted to know if the social insurance number data would be passed on from the Department of Labour to other departments and government agencies. The right hon. member suggested that social insurance numbers would be used in the future for "income tax and so on". The then prime minister interjected and said "certainly not".