

The CHAIRMAN: Well, it would depend on—

Senator MACKENZIE: I mean this can be a real problem to a lot of people.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think there is any problem, when they are applying for welfare payments.

Senator MACKENZIE: They are not applying for welfare.

The CHAIRMAN: They know what to do; here is the requirement of the law and they had better get busy on it.

Senator BENEDICKSON: This, of course, came up when discussions arose about registration with the Canada Pension Plan, and there were a number of people who expressed some apprehension about this being applied to income tax and other matters. In other words, there was the feeling that everybody in the country would be computerized. Conceivably, there would be a dossier in effect on everybody in the country and some civil servant, no matter where, could, by pressing a button, not only receive the information he was concerned with, about a person's age for security purposes or for the old age pension benefits or anything of that sort, but receive in the process information regarding practically every other personal fact in the record and history of the individual concerned. In other words, a civil servant might have access to all that information. Now, is that likely to be the result? I think there is economy in having a centralized computer, but there are a lot of people expressing some fears these days about this computer age in so far as the personal facts of the individual are concerned.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister gave some explanation in the Commons when he was questioned on that.

Senator BENEDICKSON: I am afraid I did not read those minutes.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you care to repeat that, Mr. Irwin?

Mr. IRWIN: Yes, sir. This was discussed at some length in the Commons and the minister emphasized that the introduction of this requirement concerning numbers did not detract in any way from the secrecy requirements of the Income Tax Act, and he made it as clear as he could that the situation, where one person could press a button and get all the information about a particular taxpayer, would not in fact exist. The information about income tax matters is kept separate.

Senator BENEDICKSON: He gave an assurance that any particulars with respect to income tax would be maintained by the collection and assessment section of the department, and there would not be any central dossier such as I referred to containing the information on a number of subjects?

Mr. IRWIN: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: He explained also that the computers which they have at the present time will function on numbers only. They have not got them to the stage where they will function reliably on names. There was some suggestion that when the machines they have are improved to the point where you can put these things on tape, then—and perhaps he did not imply this—you may not need a number. The indication was that part of it was the quality of computers which they had. Is that correct?

Mr. IRWIN: Yes, sir. The computers deal with numbers. It is of course possible to transfer a name to a number, but in Canada there are many people with similar or identical names. Also, names change upon marriage and people may simply change their names if they wish. What is required is a permanent, unique record for each taxpayer.

Senator SMITH (*Queens-Shelburne*): Can you tell us, Mr. Irwin, whether or not the application form necessary to complete in order to get a social insurance number is available at all the country post offices?

Mr. IRWIN: I cannot answer that definitely, sir. I do not know. I am informed that the forms are available at the district offices of the Department of National