

In terms of the history of man the need for personal privacy is a universal quest in the human experience. According to I.C. Velecky, evidence of this fact can be found in the social conditions of ancient Greece and was manifested in the customs and communal life of primitive tribes.

The amount of privacy each one of us wants or needs varies from one person to another, but every one of us requires at least a modicum of privacy if we are to protect our very humanity. It is not because we have some evil to hide from detection, but because each one of us needs to keep part of our life private if we are to maintain our dignity and pride. Clearly the historical root of the right to privacy can be said to be inalienable and natural.

In Canada there has been legislation in this field over the last several years. For example, in 1974 there was the legislation which gave control over electronic surveillance, and in March, 1978, part IV of the Canadian Human Rights Act was proclaimed. I must stress that part IV of the Canadian Human Rights Act was totally inadequate. Indeed, even though it provided for the publishing of an index of federal government data banks which would give Canadians some indication of which government departments held information about them, the government made a conscious decision not to publicize that right because it did not want to be overburdened by people seeking to exercise those rights. What could be a more devastating criticism of the government's commitment to the right of privacy than the fact that it wanted to leave it largely unmentioned?

My party has put forward an amendment to the government's constitutional package to enshrine the right to privacy in the bill of rights. Freedom from unreasonable interference in privacy, family, home and correspondence is the very least people demand that the state provide Canadians. Despite the government's perceived commitment to privacy, members opposite voted down our amendment, striking a blow at the very heart of our Canadian traditions. Government was created by the people to serve the people. It was not created, as members often seem to feel, to give the state the powers to interfere with people's lives.

The reasons it is essential we have legislation on privacy have been obvious to anyone living in modern society. As the needs of society for information about the individual have increased, the threat to privacy has increased commensurately. Indeed, in a survey done by the Department of Communications, 52 per cent of the respondents felt that computers were reducing people to just numbers; 69 per cent felt that computers caused errors because they do not take human factors into account; 37 per cent felt that computers threatened personal privacy; and 52 per cent felt that computers caused violation of confidentiality. This bill goes some distance along the way toward addressing some of the concerns which were left unaddressed by part IV of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

One of the very essential areas which is not covered in this legislation is the public concern, and a very justified public concern, about the development which has been taking place in the use of the social insurance number, moving it toward

becoming a universal identification number. The Clark government, as part of the legislation which we drew up, had a proposal to roll back the use of the social insurance number to six purposes for which it was basically designed. One of those instances, which would be the Canada student loans provision, would be a sunset law over the course of three years, and after that time the government would not be able to insist upon it in that area.

We believe it is essential that the federal government act now to show leadership in the whole field of privacy. We do not believe it was adequate for the government and for the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) to take the action of striking that provision from our bill, because the evidence is there today that a real and grave threat to the privacy of Canadians exists in the case of abuse of the social insurance number, and that it is essential that the federal government should show leadership, acting in this area, demonstrating that it is prepared to restrict its use of social insurance numbers. Instead, what it has done is simply broaden the study which we had commissioned into the use of social insurance numbers at the provincial level and among the private sector, and to ask the privacy commissioner to look at the federal government as well. We believe that is totally inadequate.

It is interesting to note that even one of the most compelling arguments in favour of social insurance numbers has been its very credibility; that it is believed there is only one social insurance number per customer. Yet in testimony before the McDonald inquiry it was revealed by one RCMP officer that 50 per cent of all cases of false pretences in one detachment he was policing made use of social insurance number cards.

• (1720)

The lack of security surrounding the social insurance number was illustrated recently by the case of the Calgary man who obtained 109 social insurance numbers to enable him to collect 59 UIC claims and a monthly income of \$33,000. Similarly, two chaps from Montreal used 60 social insurance cards over a period of two months to collect \$32,867 from the UIC. Then there was the case of the Winnipeg man who secured 25 social insurance cards and proceeded to collect \$92,000 over four and a half years.

Members on this side of the House applaud initiative, but this is not the sort of initiative we believe the government should be condoning or should be putting programs in place to foster. Yet the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) has cautioned Canadians that it is essential that social insurance numbers be used even more in the future than they have been in the past. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that my time is rapidly running out.

In wrapping up my remarks let me say that we support the government's legislation which is going forward today. We believe that it should be considered in committee and that it should be considered closely. Neither the legislation which we proposed last year nor the legislation which is before the House today should go without improvement. Both of them deserve close scrutiny and the attention of all members of