

such as something in the employee's background which would suggest that he was not a respectable citizen at one point, the capacity of the employee to maintain his job is limited. It could result in his demotion, firing or have various adverse effects. We require a law which substantially restricts access to social insurance numbers.

Since other hon. members wish to participate in this debate, in conclusion I should like to refer to the report on privacy and computers at page 86, where an amorphous fear of the loss of privacy as a result of various identification numbers is mentioned. It reads:

Accompanying this fear is a suspicion that bureaucrats confronted by numbers will tend to forget that they represent real people. The suspicion is fed by haunting memories of the Nazi system of numbering Jews in the 1930's and 1940's. The survey of Canadians by the Department of Communications revealed that 62 per cent fear that computers "will reduce us to numbers".

Fear of the cataclysm is simply the concern that, should an autocratic regime come into power, single identifying numbers would be used to assist in the compilation of investigatory dossiers which would be used as instruments of oppression. Proponents of SIN point out that the lack of comprehensive dossiers has in the past had no obvious inhibiting effect on autocrats.

Society continues to grow larger and become more complicated. The public and private organizations which dominate our lives continue to become more autocratic and less democratic. They continue to exert a power which we cannot restrict unless we are forever vigilant. I am referring to the power of the computer, the power of technology, and the power of having control over the lives of Canadians as a result of new scientific advances. Unless we express dismay over a society in which individuals have no control, then we do not do a service to our constituents.

● (1642)

**Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo):**

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start my participation in this debate by congratulating my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn), for proposing this motion today. Surely there can be no more important issue to come before parliament than the need for parliament to act when we find that mechanisms are being put in place, either by design or through complacency, which can strip away the individual privacy of our constituents and ourselves.

Like most members of parliament, I was not aware of the threat that was posed by these tiny white pieces of plastic that virtually every Canadian has today. Some 19 million or 20 million social insurance numbers have been issued. I was not aware of the implications of the problems caused by the social insurance number until I had a call about a year ago from a constituent of mine who was calling to ask what she could do because her nine-year old son had lost his social insurance card and he did not know what to do. I said: "This is outlandish. What would your nine-year old son want with a social insurance card? Why would they number him when surely he is not in the labour force and will not file an income tax return? It hardly seems reasonable to expect that he is required to have a social insurance number." Then my constituent told me that the minor hockey league in which her nine-year old son was enrolled required that every member of the team take out

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social insurance numbers. Here was a child eight years old who had been issued with a plastic card and told to carry it around. He had been told that was necessary if he was going to play hockey in his part of the league. He had to accept this government number. Then we were surprised a year later to learn that a nine-year old child had lost his social insurance number.

What an outrageous situation it is in Canada when we find that already in one of the provinces, Prince Edward Island, every citizen from birth is automatically issued a social insurance number. We have reached the point where this numbering with a single identification number is beginning to take place from the cradle to the grave.

Every member of parliament has in his constituency people who have bought Canada Savings Bonds for their children. We are finding now that if those people clip the coupons to take out the interest on their Canada Savings Bonds for their children, they are required to take out social insurance numbers for those children, who maybe are two or three years old, unless they want to have 25 per cent of the interest withheld until tax time. What sort of an outrage is this?

What sort of an outrage is it when senior citizens who have lived for 80 or 90 years without ever requiring a social insurance number now find, if they are going to be allowed to cash their coupons and their Canada Savings Bonds, that the government is requiring that they have social insurance numbers, unless they are prepared to leave behind 25 per cent of the value of that interest? I feel that the government is guilty of a breach of faith in its handling of the Canada Savings Bonds issue. Surely the government had a responsibility, if it had the intention of requiring that Canadians have social insurance numbers to cash coupons, unless they wanted to leave 25 per cent behind, to tell Canadians at the time they sold them the bonds that this requirement would be put upon them. Instead, after the contract was made the government changed the rules, just last year.

Let us take a look at the scope in which the social insurance number is used in the government and in the private sector. An article in the December 19 issue of the *Globe and Mail* dealt with this question of the proliferation in the use of the social insurance number. Here are a couple of paragraphs from it:

SINs now are used as identification to cash cheques and make credit checks in department stores. Libraries, banks, insurance companies and hospitals use SINs. Canadians must provide SINs to cash government savings bonds. SINs are a must on income tax returns.

Youngsters playing peewee hockey are asked for SINs for the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association computer. A Winnipeg ballet school uses SINs. By special agreement with the federal government, the Prince Edward Island registrar of vital statistics applies for and receives social insurance numbers for all newborn babies in that province.

The federal government singles out and keeps track of foreign workers who require work permits by giving them special SINs beginning with the number 9. Employers can be fined up to \$5,000, if they hire a 9-numbered person who doesn't have a work permit.

In Ontario, 25 of the 44 public health units filed the immunization records of school children by SIN. The school systems of Saskatchewan and Ontario use SINs for record-keeping for students in senior grades. Motor vehicle drivers' records in Quebec and hunting licences in Manitoba are recorded by SIN.