

Family Allowances

This policy has been the subject of an in-depth review by my senior officials. Although several arguments can be made for not requesting a social insurance number, the use of social insurance numbers is a great benefit in properly identifying the taxpayer.

It is merely bureaucratic convenience and expedience.

● (2102)

For this reason, the decision was made to continue requesting social insurance numbers where one has not been provided. If a social insurance number is not provided upon request, under certain conditions, the return may be processed; however, in all cases, a further request for a social insurance number will be issued.

In your case, my officials at the Ottawa district taxation office will be processing your 1977 return without your social insurance number but a further request for a social insurance number will be issued. I might mention that if your circumstances in respect of future taxation years are similar to those for the 1977 taxation year, your returns may be considered incomplete—

That is, under section 237(2). The letter continues:

—and not suitable for final processing until such time as a social insurance number is provided.

This is bureaucratic nonsense of the worst kind. This is what I want to bring into perspective with the requirements of this bill, particularly clause 7 which reads as follows:

(2) Every person who, knowingly, or under circumstances amounting to gross negligence in the carrying out of any duty or obligation imposed by or under this act,—

This refers to the Income Tax Act:

—has made or has participated in, assented to or acquiesced in the making of, a false statement or omission in a return,—

The omission referred to is the social insurance number from the form that has to be signed by the two spouses, because there are joint statements of income. There are hundreds and thousands of married women and mothers in this country who do not have a social security number and who do not need it, yet a 25 per cent penalty is imposed on a family unit where one spouse does not have a social insurance number. That is a big club, Mr. Chairman. Children who may have received a Canada Savings Bond from a grandparent for a birthday or for Christmas cannot get full value for it, because a child cannot get a social security number and would have to pay the 25 per cent penalty. But they are not taxpayers and therefore cannot file a return. It is a "Catch 22" situation all over again.

I am told on the quiet that this provision is included on the insistence of officials at the Department of National Revenue, so I am addressing the minister in her capacity as Acting Minister of National Revenue.

This provision is immoral. It is a breach of an undertaking of this House to the people of Canada that this would never happen. I see some hon. members laughing at this use of the word "immoral" in regard to the social security number. They should see some of the letters that have been written to me about their performance on television during debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-203.

I make this final plea to the minister, that this insistence on and extension of the use of the social security number is dishonest. If it is a question of ultimately getting total identifi-

cation of all individuals, step by step and surreptitiously, then we must protest.

The other day the minister said quite candidly that she was responsible for the administration of \$14 billion of social security legislation. I fully agree that was the purpose—and unemployment insurance—but nothing else.

Miss Bégin: But this is social policy.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): It is within taxation. These are amendments to the Income Tax Act and there will be no bootlegging through the back door. Perhaps I can emphasize this by taking my argument to absurd limits. I can see that the Department of National Health and Welfare will soon try to obtain sufficient information to put in their computers so that the minister will be able to engage in the mating game. She will have information on all males and females in this country and through her computers she will be able to match them up and perhaps send out little suggestions. So through the Department of National Health and Welfare the ultimate use of this information that is slowly being compiled will be for what I call the national mating game. I will not say this particular minister will do it because I do not see her future in this ministry for very long.

Miss Bégin: Where am I going?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I do not know but not over on that side of the ministerial benches. For the life of me, Mr. Chairman, I cannot see why we must have this extension, under penalty, of the use of social security numbers.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Chairman, I know the hon. member for Edmonton West has some slight concern in the area of social insurance numbers. This was the subject of his recent private member's bill on which a number of members on this side participated, as well as in a question of privilege raised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert. The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar also brought the matter up on one or two occasions.

I know from discussions publicly in this House and privately with the hon. member for Edmonton West recently that he is exercised about the relatively few Canadians who are themselves concerned about the law this parliament passed a year or so ago. It had nothing to do with bureaucratic nonsense; it was a law of this parliament. I am sure the hon. member for Edmonton West is as anxious as anyone that the laws passed in this House be obeyed throughout the country.

We are moving around in a wide circle in the course of discussions tonight, and I suppose we might as well continue that way. We are now talking about the use of social insurance numbers as a requirement for cashing bearer bond coupons.

In order to insure proper compliance with our income tax laws, this parliament considered it appropriate to pass a law, which was enshrined in subsection (5) of section 234 in January, 1977, which said in effect that when you cash bearer bond coupons in the future, in order that the income tax department may have some hope of tracing unreported