

interested in exploring with the provincial Governments the possibility of a central agency which might have a national computerized system for tracing such individuals. There is a suggestion that such a tracing system involving release of information raises questions of invasion of privacy. And so they do. The issue, Mr. Speaker, simply stated is; when should the public interest protecting information supplied to the federal Government yield to the public interest in ensuring compliance of maintenance orders?

The current Access to Information Act which has recently passed in Parliament does allow all members of the public access to Government materials requested by them. But it specifically does not permit disclosure of personal information. Address and employment particulars are, of course, of this nature. In addition, the Privacy Act prohibits the disclosure and use of all personal information, including address particulars, under the control of a Government institution, without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. The policy of the Privacy Act is to protect the confidentiality of information given by individuals. This policy is implemented by prohibiting release of information concerning an individual, except where it is specifically authorized as an exception to the general rule.

In this context, the Government is now proceeding to consult human rights and other interest groups across Canada regarding ways to balance enforcement of maintenance and custody orders with protection of privacy. The results of these consultations will contribute largely to the establishment of a federal position on the release of information.

The concerns covered in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, are concerns which have been the concerns of several jurisdictions in Canada for many years. In 1981, a federal-provincial committee was established on the enforcement of maintenance and custody orders. That committee had a twofold mandate. Its first mandate was to canvas the existing range of enforcement remedies across the country. Flowing from that, it was to identify and suggest to Government means of improvement of enforcement. That committee did a fair amount of work under the aegis of the Attorney General of Canada (Mr. MacGuigan) and the Attorneys General of the ten Provinces. It submitted a report which identified three areas for action. These were areas within provincial jurisdiction, federal jurisdiction and areas that have some joint federal and provincial jurisdictional connotations. The committee was asked to look at the third category again. The attorneys general themselves have also looked at it. I understand that the results of the work of that committee are now at the point where the various jurisdictions are contemplating what can be done in a regulatory and legislative way at the provincial levels, the federal level and jointly, as the case may be, to effect something nearer a resolution to the problem that we are talking about this afternoon.

I believe everybody in this House, Mr. Speaker, is very sympathetic to the concerns which are embodied in this Bill. At the same time, if the proposals contained in this Bill are legislated they would have certain implications. It is for that reason that I would support the fullest possible discussion and

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airing of the concerns that are involved. At the same time, I would not want to see this Bill come to a vote this afternoon. The many matters relating to enforcement of maintenance and custody orders are under active review by the federal-provincial committee to which I previously made reference. It is only fair that we not in any way short circuit the very good work which is being done by the Attorneys General and their respective staffs across this country.

The problem is one that begs solution. The gentleman for Cariboo-Chilcotin used words like "delaying and stonewalling over a 10 or 11 year period". It is a good phrase, but I do not think it applies in this situation. I do not think anyone in this country, barring the few people who are keeping their whereabouts secret to avoid the enforcement of those maintenance orders, wants to stonewall this particular issue. I find that many people in every jurisdiction would like to find a solution to the problem. I find that many people would like the legislators and those who write the regulations to find an effective way to ensure more complete enforcement of those maintenance and custody orders. I do not believe it is a fair suggestion that anyone has been stonewalling. As soon as we talk about stonewalling we must say why we think they are stonewalling and what purpose, what motive, can be served.

● (1550)

Mr. Greenaway: Indifference.

Mr. Simmons: The Hon. Member for Cariboo-Chilcotin says "indifference".

Mr. Huntington: And apathy.

Mr. Simmons: These are possible motives. I do not believe they are realistic under the circumstances because so many of us, as legislators and as individuals, are affected by the inadequacies of the present system. I believe that there is indifference and apathy about many things in this country. I do not believe this is an issue about which there is indifference. There is a concern by Attorneys General to find a solution, not a half solution which will create more problems than it solves.

Mr. Huntington: Tell us about those problems.

Mr. Simmons: I will tell the Hon. Member for Capilano about the problems. I mentioned a moment ago the problem of squaring the requirements of privacy considerations with the requirements for information to better enforce those maintenance orders. That is one of the problems. If the Hon. Member has a short answer to that problem, he ought to give it to the House. There are concerns on both sides and somewhere we have to strike a balance.

I have given an undertaking this afternoon on behalf of the Government that once the issue has been fully canvassed—and it is being canvassed pretty actively right now—this Government will indicate to the House its position on that particular issue. If the Hon. Member is asking if all the problems are solved, the answer is, clearly, no. If he is asking, do we support the spirit of what he is proposing, the answer is an unqualified