

Private Members' Business

announcement for the protection of personal information in the context of the government's response to the report of the Information Highway Advisory Council.

While I agree with the spirit of Bill C-315, I believe the points which I have outlined clearly explain why the scope of the bill is too narrow and why it cannot be as effective as the hon. member would like it to be.

● (1925)

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Caribou—Chilcotin for the introduction of his private member's Bill C-315.

The bill will protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves obtained by certain corporations. There have been many times when my mailbox at home is literally stuffed with so-called addressed junk mail. We all get it and I think it is safe to say most of us do not like it. In most cases it is a request for money for an obscure organization or it is an ad for a product we know will not be exactly how it appears in the picture.

We file this mail in the circular file, file 13, in a place where it rightfully belongs. However, what is it exactly that I am throwing out in that situation? Is it just a letter or a notice from some organization that happened to get my name and address out of the phone book? Chances are it did not come from a phone book but rather from some corporation that had me on its computer list and that corporation probably sold my name as a part of a mailing package to some interest group that has an interest in me as part of a targeted marketing scheme.

What could it know about my personal information? It can include a variety of things and could be gathered from several different sources. It could include a home address, business address, unlisted telephone numbers, physical characteristics, health records, education, employment, financial history, social insurance number, the magazines we read or even what political party we belong to.

Every Canadian who uses credit has their credit rating and related information stored in American computers and filed under their Canadian social insurance number.

Members should recall what was said in the House by the government of the day when the social insurance number was introduced. The government of the day misled us. Canadians, as it is now commonly observed by the commentators, were lied to about the scope, the use and the implications of our social insurance number. However, we cannot now turn back the clock of history. However, we can remember what group broke faith with Canadians on this subject. It was the Liberals.

It is an old story, the social insurance number debate in the House with the solemn promises made, especially in stark contrast to the current state of affairs. Are we any wiser now in this techno age? Are the Liberals? That is why we need much more protection in this general area. This private member's bill is a useful part of that developing awareness.

Opponents might say disseminating such information is not serious. I point out some examples that caused me to believe the issue is quite serious. In a recent *Globe and Mail* article a story was raised about a computer company that recently sent samples of its Internet browsing software free to four million people. However, when it was used the sample software automatically dialled up the company's home page, gathered information about users without their permission, gathered Internet addresses, types of software being used on the computer and who knows what else.

There are people who are geniuses with computers. They are capable of breaking encrypted codes and getting access to top government information. If they are able to get this type of information with ease there is no question what type of information they can obtain from me all without my knowledge or my permission yet still completely legal. This bothers me and I am sure that when more Canadians are made aware of this it will trouble them as well.

The Internet is something completely new I am sure to most members of the House. Computer technology seems to be updated hourly, too fast for me to keep up. Last year I purchased a new laptop computer and at the time it was the latest technology. A week after I bought it a newer and better model was available. It is the same with the Internet. Every day someone has a new way of tapping into someone else's information.

Control of access on the Internet remains an unanswered problem. With more and more people accessing it everyday, concerns certainly rise. People have expressed a concern to me and therefore I believe something must be done. We cannot sit around and do nothing. If we do, the technological world will overrun us and could literally prevent any protectionist measures from being eventually implemented.

The computer is only one of many ways of retrieving confidential information. I have heard of a hospital employee who supplied a computer disc of names of terminally ill patients to a local funeral home. There are no clear rules surrounding our privacy. The result is a clear lack of individual security.

The largest problem with parallel provincial privacy acts is they do not cover any federally regulated institutions. Bill C-315 affects all corporations as outlined in section 2 of the Canada Labour Code such as air transportation companies,