

*Income Tax Amendment*

number system was implemented for the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Canada Pension Plan. The first public use of the taxation number occurred in 1965 when personalized 1964 tax forms were mailed to each taxpayer then on record. I am sure most hon. members are familiar with the personalized return forms; they received them in the mail. The forms bear the taxpayer's name, the last known address, and his unique number.

The unique taxation number has been of great assistance in meeting the problems of exact identification inherent in computer record keeping, but it has some serious shortcomings. Not all taxpayers choose to use the labelled return bearing their number. Others do not receive their returns because they have moved frequently. In either case the essential identifying number is unavailable to the department's computers. Furthermore the taxation number is based in part on name, and is therefore subject to variability when names change, as in the event of marriage.

Shortly after the Department of National Revenue developed its numbers system the requirements of the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the advent of the Canada Pension Plan dictated the need for the design and implementation of a new and universal system of permanent unique numbers suitable for massive record keeping operations by electronic computers. The social insurance numbers system was the result. It now embraces over 9 million members of the population.

To carry out its responsibilities for collecting Canada Pension Plan contributions and to ensure that contributors' records are accurately maintained, the Department of National Revenue must use these social security numbers and require that all contributors use them on the reporting forms required to administer the plan. Thus the department is now using one system of numbers for the identification of taxpayers and another for Canada Pension Plan contributors, most of whom are the same.

As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, when speaking on second reading of the bill, I do not know why there should be objection to simplifying a system. I can understand the objection to having a number, but I do not see what objection there can be to having one number instead of several. I submit that this is a natural evolution in the system. I do not think it in any way infringes on our essential liberties nor in any way does it disclose to

[Mr. Sharp.]

unauthorized persons the private business of taxpayers or individuals. I submit this is a very desirable improvement.

**Mr. Smallwood:** I did not intend to speak on this bill. I wish to thank the hon. member for Medicine Hat for drawing our attention to what the government is doing, forcing numbers on the Canadian people. The government is treating us like a bunch of cattle. In western Canada in the spring of the year we mark our cattle; the government wants to do that to our people.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Smallwood:** Do not laugh. This is a serious matter. Here we find the people of Canada being forced to become numbers. We will not have names any more; we will be numbers. They will introduce a punch system and everybody will have to stamp his number wherever he goes. This is an absolute disgrace in a democracy.

**Mr. Côté (Longueuil):** Should we use letters instead of numbers?

**Mr. Smallwood:** The Postmaster General probably could not even read letters. He made a mess of them in his post office. It is disgraceful to treat people as numbers. We shall not have any more names; people will be No. 21, No. 23—they will be numbers instead of names.

The minister talked about computers and how efficient they are. Well, they are so efficient that they did not send a man in my constituency his cheque. They sent it to somebody else. The machine had the wrong number and somebody else got his money. The same held true for the May and June cheques. We were told: "Oh, but the machine cannot make a mistake; it cannot make cheques out to the wrong number." If that is so, where did these wrongly directed cheques go? One man in my constituency has been without a cheque since May.

What kind of outfit runs this country? Are we all to be cattle? I want to see more people getting up and complaining about being turned into cattle. I think this is disgraceful.

● (9:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Knowles:** I do not wish to disappoint the hon. member for Battle River-Camrose. He seemed sure that we would not object to the use of numbers in this very complicated operation. Frankly, I am puzzled as to why this annoyance with numbers has come into the picture. Most of us in this chamber were