

Income Tax Amendment

my car on the street. Nor is it any more a denial of individual liberty than it is to have a number on my marriage licence, or because, as a minister who can still perform marriages, I have a number under which I do it. There is no loss of liberty or personality in this sort of thing.

On the other hand, if we are to deal with this complicated business of keeping all the records which are required for things like income tax, unemployment insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and so on, we need a system which will work electronically. Others in this house were out, last year, as I was, to the place at Tunney's Pasture where these things are operated. I was certainly convinced that but for electronic equipment the Minister of Manpower and Immigration could not find all the people required to do the work of looking after our income tax records, let alone the Canada Pension Plan records.

An hon. Member: Government is getting too big.

Mr. Knowles: Well, if government is getting too big, this is one way of catching up. Maybe government is doing more and more things on behalf of the people of Canada. If these things are to be done, and done efficiently and effectively, I think we have to use modern methods.

As I understand it, one of the things we must have in this country is portability for the various social insurance plans. We have portability between the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan, and it is a condition of the medicare legislation that there is to be portability among the provinces. If we are to carry this out effectively I think we must have one number for our people, not two, or three, or half a dozen numbers. I also think it is a service to our people to teach them to try to get these numbers. People take a long time to do the things which need to be done or which the law requires. The Canada Pension Plan legislation makes it clear that unless people have the number they cannot get pension benefits. It may seem harsh, but unless records are kept how can the benefits be paid?

The advertisement is careful to say that only people over 18 need to have their social insurance numbers, their SIN, as the Department of National Revenue puts it. The government's new morality does not require that anyone under 18 have a SIN. It does not start under that age.

[Mr. Knowles.]

• (9:40 p.m.)

Mr. Fairweather: It does not restrict it to those over age 18.

Mr. Knowles: It does not make it compulsory under age 18. There already is a provision in the Canada Pension Plan legislation that people must apply for it if their income is \$600 a year or more. This legislation does not go that far, but it does say that persons whose incomes are \$1,000 in respect of a single person or \$2,000 in respect of married persons must apply.

It has been said that this is an additional burden on our people. Surely, Mr. Chairman, it must also be said that one of the ways to save money in the government is to have things done efficiently. If we do not have electronic methods and are going to have it done by individual pen-pushing accountants, then it will cost that much more. Surely this is ordinary elementary common sense. I think that a lot of the talk we have had today and on other occasions about this matter is just so much talk. I believe that, just as we have accepted all these other numbers, we should not quarrel about having one number for our income tax, for our Canada Pension Plan, and for our unemployment insurance. Why not have one number for all the things concerning which we are in contact with the federal government, or indeed with the provinces, particularly where portability is required. Mr. Chairman, it was not my idea that this social insurance number be called SIN, but now that it has been so christened, I think it is not a bad idea.

Mr. Smallwood: Mr. Chairman, I should like to reply for a moment to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre who gave us quite a sermon regarding numbers. He said that he has a number, as a minister. Possibly he would like to use that number, marry himself to the Liberals and be through with it. After listening to him I am more concerned than I was before that we should not have this compulsory number which is forced upon us, because I believe we must stick up for democracy. After hearing him I am more convinced than I was before that this is straight socialism. I am surprised that the Liberals swallowed it. I would go further and say that it is communism. We should wake up and realize what these people are trying to do to us. It is time we looked after our democracy, or we will go to sleep and then find that we