

of thinking in the country is expressed, we will hear those phrases again and again in the future and there will likely be a call for a further crackdown on alleged abuses.

It has often struck me and many others, Mr. Speaker, that if the business community attempted to eliminate shoplifting it could go broke in the process. A percentage of abuse or loss must be allowed in any business. I think we ought to look at the unemployment insurance system in the same way. We should attempt to persuade the rip-off artists running around that they cannot get away with such abuse. But it is folly to engage in a program such as the one introduced a few years ago when hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent to hire investigators and run advertisements to bring the abuse below the level that is normal in any other business activity. Surely, at some time we reach the point of diminishing return.

I worry that we will face a period of backlash on this question very soon. Attempts to tighten up the system do not usually affect those who make a profession of ripping it off. Unfortunately, there are a few of those people and they quite often become specialists in this line. No matter how the regulations are tightened up or the laws redrafted, they can always find a way around them. Those who suffer are those who seldom claim benefits. They may mistakenly think that because they have contributed to the plan for years and years they have earned the right to benefits, but as they are not experts on the rules, when faced with stalling, red tape, trick questions or hassles their reaction is often to say, "To hell with the UIC and the government", and walk away with it. As a result, they and their families suffer because of their stubborn although rather admirable pride. It is through no fault of their own that they are out of work, even if it is only temporary, and they tend to resent interrogation and the often trick questions that they are faced with.

I should like to draw your attention now to a few specific areas that should be changed. In terms of the deduction of income tax from unemployment insurance benefits, it can be argued, and it is now the case, that we treat that as income. If we treated other sectors in our society in a somewhat equal way, I suppose one could say that that is fair. When we deal with the unemployed, we say a buck is a buck. The Carter royal commission tried to suggest that we do that in other areas of our economy a few years ago without as much success as it had in the administration of unemployment insurance.

● (1540)

Is it not possible for the government to consider holding back on the deduction, holding back on receiving those revenues, until the end of the tax year when people fill out their forms? When someone is thrown out of work, that is the time when a person is least able to take an even further cut in income. Certainly if one's annual income comes up to an appropriate figure, that person should be paying taxes. That is fine, but when a person is already taking at least a 40 per cent reduction in income level, I suggest that that is the wrong time to be drawing back into government coffers even further the

rather small amounts of income on which these persons and their families have to live.

Other members mentioned earlier in this debate that they felt the matter of workers' vacation pay should not be considered as income for the purpose of delaying payment of unemployment insurance benefits. I would agree with that. Again, it is difficult to find any reasonable rationale for the delay that is caused in making payments simply because someone over the course of the year has accrued moneys to be used for that person's vacation. Why should people be expected to give up their vacation simply because they happen to be unemployed for two months of the year? They pay for that. Those who negotiate agreements make some sacrifice. They make a trade-off. It is not extra money, but it is for a specific purpose, and surely those people are entitled to proper vacations the same as anyone else.

The final issue I want to raise is that of double jeopardy when it comes to the situation of employees who are fired. When an employee finds himself dismissed—maybe quite properly, and in many cases it is—from his employment because of some action or inaction on his part within the company for which he works, that is enough penalty. But to suggest that people's unemployment insurance payments should be held back for a period of six weeks when they have already been faced with the maximum penalty that someone in the work force can pay for whatever indiscretion, is a form of double jeopardy and totally without any justice.

Some people feel that the Liberals giveth and the Liberals taketh away. In my opinion, that is what we have seen over the period of the last few years. I do not know what the hon. member for Lincoln is going to say, but I suspect that he will have some regrets to express about some of the things that have happened to this program over the last few years. If he does, then I wish him every success in trying to bend the social conscience of that party which forms the government into the direction which hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers wish it would take. It is not a welfare program. It is not basically an income distribution program. It is a program of social insurance, but it is more than insurance for working people who find themselves out of work. It is insurance for the democratic process and it is insurance for the society in which we live. It did not come into place, this program or others like it, because of the soft hearts either of the population at large or members of this House of Commons. It came into place because it was necessary to keep society operative and its economy functioning.

It takes only a very quick glance at the kind of material we find in newspapers daily to see suggestions that we are moving into perhaps the deepest recession—if that is the term—in decades. It would be necessary, not only for the working people of this country, but for the people of the business community in Canada and all others, that we maintain those people who have been in our work force at an appropriate and dignified standard, at least in the short term. This should be done until we can put into place in Canada the kinds of mechanisms, job-creation opportunities and intelligent planning which will