

you know that in Toronto, 17 per cent of the population is on welfare? This is Toronto, where people used to come from the Maritimes and the West to find jobs.

[English]

When you pass legislation with the sole purpose in mind of beating up on the poor, you create problems in society. I am convinced that the governments in power after the war, especially in Canada and in the United States, made decisions such as establishing the social programs that we have to create jobs. They were afraid that if all those young men and women, especially the young men, faced the prospect of no jobs, nothing to do and no money, there would be problems in the country. We can do that when we are afraid. When the powerful and the rich are afraid, they find ways of making it possible for everyone to have a decent living.

This government has lost sight of that fact. It cut unemployment insurance on the one hand, but on the other hand it had no problem finding \$100 million last year for its friends at Westray Mines. Four or five years ago, it had no problem finding \$400 million, \$500 million, \$600 million or \$2 billion to bail out the banks.

What will the government achieve by this measure? Will it create jobs? If in addition to a program that cut unemployment insurance benefits there was a program that created jobs, every Canadian would applaud it. However, this government is creating more unemployment and driving more people on to the welfare rolls.

I can tell you, my friends, that when you drive people to social assistance, it is quite a bit different than when they are forced to look to the UI program. It is not true that people in the Maritimes want to work for 10 weeks and draw 42 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits. When there was work in Toronto or in Calgary, people from the Maritimes went to these places for 20 weeks, 6 months and 10 months at a time. They left their families at home so that they could go out and earn money, and come back to spend three or four months at home.

Many of us in the Maritimes have members of families, or know friends who have moved to Toronto — and used to move to Montreal, too, before they started that foolish policy there of devoting all their efforts to language. As a result, the economy of that city has gone down the tubes. In days prior to the 1970s, French-speaking people from the Maritimes went to Montreal to work. After that policy change, they had to go to Toronto. You cannot make Canadians believe that Maritimers want the benefit of the unemployment insurance program without having to work.

Everyone knows that only three years ago the unemployment rate in Toronto was only 3 per cent. There was

work available and people wanted to work. Today the unemployment rate in Toronto is 12 per cent and 17 per cent of the population is on social assistance. The big boys from the big cities here are trying to tell me of the rake-off in the unemployment insurance program. People do not cheat the UI program any more than people cheat on income tax, doctors cheat the medical system or politicians cheat the system. Yes, there are cheats. It is sad to say that they are among us, but the government should not try to tar all UI recipients with the same cheater's brush.

**Senator Frith:** Well said, sir.

**Senator Thériault:** You have created cheaters, and this kind of legislation will create more cheaters and cause more hardship. Another 100,000 kids will go hungrier in a country that is supposed to be rich. I say to all of you and to all Canadians that if war broke out tomorrow, we would find money. Well, war broke out two years ago — the worst kind of war that can exist, a war that creates poverty and petty criminals, yet the government brands UI recipients as cheaters. Yes, it is not much worse than Haiti in the days of Duvalier. The rich get richer. People build bigger houses around this country while more people are out on the streets because they have no place to stay.

This is a country that, after the war in 1945, was deeply in debt but was able to go on and create an economic system that provided jobs and social security, and thus created an atmosphere wherein Canadians were happy and generous. Today, can we honestly say that Canadians are generous people? People are fighting for everything, and over anything. Any subject matter that comes up causes a fight, often in the streets. When people are in need, they will find ways to provide bread for their children. I know I would, and I am no different from people who have to resort to the UI program.

That program made it possible for communities, such as fishing communities in the Maritimes, to prosper. People were driving decent cars and had a decent refrigerator in their homes. Garage operators were able to make a profit and storekeepers made a good living. Since 1990, with the coming into force of Bill C-21 and now this bill, people in rural areas have gone broke, and will continue to do so. Fewer cars and less furniture will be sold. Eventually, the factories in Toronto and Montreal will have to cut their workforces.

• (2120)

I say to my friends from Quebec who are here to vote on this piece of legislation: Look at this piece of paper and realize that in the next fiscal year the government of Quebec will have to find \$4.4 billion for social assistance. That province will be faced with 12 or 15 per cent unemployment. It will also be faced with higher medical bills because when one is poor, one is not as healthy; when one is hungry one gets sick. Perhaps senators opposite do not know that.