

ans living in poverty by 1990. I point out to honourable senators a Machiavellian ingenuity here. It will increase the number of persons below the poverty line. You will remember that the Minister of Finance complained that there are not enough rich people in Canada, so he has to tax the poor. With this cold-hearted logic, having decided that his tax base is the poor, he proceeds to increase his tax base by increasing poverty. As a result of this budget, more than three-quarters of a million Canadians will fall below the poverty line by 1990. More than 200,000 elderly Canadians living on fixed incomes will be forced into poverty because of the Mulroney government budget. It will cast more Canadians into poverty than did the global economic recession in 1981 and 1982. At the very least, his budget will round up more Canadians into the poverty-line corral for future taxation and punishment.

● (1620)

That is where the government and the Prime Minister stand in the very first important decisive action this government has even taken. This government has done nothing up to the time it presented its budget and suddenly we find the Prime Minister pitter-pattering, as Jeffrey Simpson says, scuttling around in the bottom of the box he has fallen into; a box with high, slippery sides; scurrying around, trying to find a way out. What can he do?

With the style that he and Ronald Reagan have made famous, he can act like none of this is his fault. He prefers, as does President Reagan, to take credit for anything that is good, but anything that is bad is somebody else's fault. Now that he is in trouble, we can expect him to indicate that it wasn't his fault. Maybe he will point over to Mr. Wilson and say, "There is the man with his hand in the cookie jar. I did not know what was going on; I did not understand that this was going to be in the budget. I would not do this to the old people. I left this budget to others. I was playing a gig in Quebec City with my new vaudeville partner, President Reagan." Honourable senators, it is rather reminiscent of the old vaudeville act of Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shea. Perhaps some of you are not old enough to remember that team.

**Senator Murray:** I remember.

**Senator Frith:** Then you will grasp the metaphor, I am sure. Even Amos 'n Andy were around at that time, too. In any event, Mr. Mulroney was doing his song and dance there in Quebec City, and perhaps he will say, "I did not really know what was in the budget. The minute my back was turned, these people go around betraying the elderly. I will just have to blame Michael Wilson." After all, the Prime Minister seems to get away with dumping on his other colleagues. He dumps on the Minister of State for External Affairs—and the minister takes it; he appoints distinguished Canadians to the Senate, and then calls senators a bunch of hacks—and they take it. The question is: Will he do it with Mr. Wilson? He may get away with it when he dumps on these others, and this, I admit, is gratuitous, but I do not think he will get away with it with Michael Wilson. I play squash with Michael Wilson and he is a pretty tough cookie. I think if the Prime Minister tries to dump on Mike Wilson and leave him standing there, out front,

with his hand in the cookie jar, Mike Wilson will tell the Prime Minister where to go.

In any event, no matter how hard he tries, he will still be down there, because the elderly know that he is still trapped in that box that he has fallen into and, although he might try to say that none of what he is in got on him, the elderly will see through that, as will all Canadians, because they will see that some of it did get on him; in fact, a lot got on him. So there he is, in the first serious box he has been in, behaving in this way, as we can expect.

Now, the ultimate irony. Who comes to his rescue but the Senate. The Senate of Canada, the very body he sneers at and reviles; we senators, with this motion, reach down to pull him out of his box. With "love thine enemy" Christian charity, the Senate says to the Prime Minister: "Stop being a mouse, scurrying around in the bottom of that box, trying to find a way out. Stand up like a man and, in view of the adverse effects on the standard of living of senior citizens resulting from elimination of full indexation of pension benefits, rescind this particular provision of the budget immediately."

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, there is something about the opening picture sketched in the speech of my honourable friend that caught my attention. He spoke of that dear little old lady about my age, I think, if he said 67.

**Senator Frith:** Sixty-nine.

**Senator Roblin:** Sixty-nine?

**Senator Frith:** It was a man, though.

**Senator Roblin:** Well then, a dear little old man of 69.

**Senator Frith:** I did not say that he was dear, or little, actually; just old—and not that old—Canadian and poor, that's all.

**Senator Roblin:** I think probably when I finish with my speech, you will find that there is some relevance in my remarks, so I would be obliged if you would wait for the development of my argument before you start your usual tirade—

**Senator Frith:** No, you were quoting me. I just wanted you to quote me correctly.

**Senator Roblin:** —because I have a responsibility to that elderly citizen, male or female, who appeared on television and that is to say to them, honestly and frankly, that the policy we are debating today is a policy which the Progressive Conservative Government of Canada, in whose cabinet I sit, believes to be one which, on the whole, is a policy and a budget which is advantageous for the people of this country. While I intend to deal as best I can with the allegations that have been put forth as to unfair treatment of elderly citizens and seniors, I think it would be quite wrong for me to limit my remarks to the context of that particular problem, because it can only be considered when we look at our nation as a whole; it can only be considered in fairness and in wisdom if we relate it to the economic problems of the country.