

Senator Thériault: That is right. I believe that your Tory radical philosophy against universal programming is telling you that you must do it before you are defeated or it will never be done. That is why.

There is also another reason: You may fool some of the people because of that first cheque in January, but I warn you, people are not easily fooled in 1992.

The government should also realize one other thing: Why are the people of this country so concerned? They are concerned because they have lost confidence. I have been talking with people who are 50 and 55 years old. They are working and they have decent jobs, but they are not spending. Why are they not spending? Because they are concerned that this government will change the system so that, when they reach 65, they will have no Old Age Pension. They are even concerned about their Canada Pension. They are concerned because your government has not kept its word. People are not spending because they have no confidence in you.

Senator Murray: There are members of the Senate receiving Family Allowance benefits. Do you think that is right?

Senator Thériault: I know what I am talking about when I speak of Family Allowance.

Senator Murray: There are members of the Senate receiving Family Allowance benefits. Do you think they should?

Senator Thériault: I live in a small community. I ran a small business. I knew whenever that day of the month arrived when the Family Allowance cheques were received by the mothers, because the mothers spent that money on their children. The Family Allowance was instituted as a mother's program, regardless of whether they were married or single.

Senator Murray: What difference does that make now?

Senator Thériault: The philosophy of this government is the same philosophy that started out in England under Thatcher, in the U.S.A. under Reagan and Bush, and in Canada under Mulroney. Are you surprised when we get reports, month after month, that people are not spending; that people are not buying? Who spends the money, generally speaking?

Senator Murray: There will be more for people with lower incomes.

Senator Thériault: I still cannot understand, after all the years of looking at these problems, why the big business people, the manufacturers, do not realize that if the middle and lower income people do not spend their money, the economy will go down. If they are not buying, the manufacturers will close down. Even the big business people will make less money. But, no! Instead it seems that there has been around for the last 20 years a philosophy that aims at preventing the poor from becoming a little better off and from having a few dollars more to spend.

This kind of legislation—not only this bill, but a number of bills which have been enacted by your government—is one of the reasons why it is taking so long to get out of this recession

which really should be called a depression. If it were not for the social programs which were passed and enacted by the Liberal governments over the years, we would be in a real depression, not a recession. However, you do not seem to have given that much thought.

Senator Murray: I do not think you have read the bill.

Senator Thériault: This is bad legislation. I will finish my few remarks with this thought: It is a known fact that programs for the poor quickly become poor programs. Why is it that medicare is so popular? Because every one of us, even here in this chamber, have received some benefits from it. I am sure for a lot of us it would be easier, and cheaper perhaps, not to have medicare because we can afford to pay our doctors' bills and our hospital bills.

Why is medicare so popular? Because everyone benefits. Why was the universal Old Age Pension so popular? Because everyone benefitted from it. Why is the Family Allowance program—which you are destroying here—so popular? Because everyone in the country benefitted from it. I am telling you what is the end result when you have programs only for the poor.

Senator Murray: That is not progressive social policy, whatever you call it.

Senator Thériault: When government policy is only for the poor, what happens?

Senator Frith: Do you think some senators should not get medicare?

Senator Murray: I think some senators should not receive Family Allowance benefits.

Senator Frith: And should they also not get medicare?

Senator Murray: No, no. That is a totally different program.

Senator Frith: Why? You say they can afford to do without it, therefore they should not have it. And that is what you will do with medicare, too.

Let's just watch. They will do the same thing with medical care. It is a giveaway.

Senator Thériault: This is why I protest so loudly: Ten or twenty years down the road, after people have forgotten how bad this government was during its eight years in power, someone will come up with a program that says: We will reduce income taxes. They may even reduce the GST. You will not say why or how, but you will end up cutting off the Old Age Pensions completely if you follow this philosophy to its natural conclusion.

You say you prefer to give the money to the poor. Perhaps then the poor will become poorer once they reach 90. Perhaps you will grant people the Old Age Pension once they reach age 90. You certainly no longer have Family Allowance for every mother in this country.

Senator Murray: The rich will not get it. Senators will not get it.