

In any event, a majority of Canadians — 54 per cent according to a Gallup poll released on February 20 — oppose this ill-considered legislation, and the government, if it has any backbone and compassion left, must withdraw it immediately.

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I was touched by the words of a former Liberal, Senator Chaput-Rolland, and her instinctive distaste for this legislation. I thought that she might have been inspired by the short sentence that has sometimes been called the first sentence of the renaissance: "It is human to help those that need help." That sentence is said to be the first sentence of the renaissance and is from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. My own copy says, "'Tis human to have compassion upon the unhappy." But it is most frequently cited as I first cited it, namely, "It is human to help those that need help."

The corollary is that it is inhuman not to offer such help. This inhuman legislation is another count in the long indictment against this government's inhumanity.

[Translation]

Senator Molgat: Honourable senators, I see Senator Bolduc rising. That means he will put an end to this debate, which frankly is somewhat surprising. It is incredible that only the mover of such an important bill has risen in favour of it; obviously all the senators opposite are ashamed of this bill. They are clearly not ready to defend it.

Senator Frith: Not even Senator Chaput-Rolland.

Senator Molgat: Not one of them is willing to rise; the bill sponsor is the only one. If Senator Simard wants to speak, he is invited to do so. We are inviting you, Senator Simard. I will take my seat and give you the floor. No! Not even Senator Simard is willing to defend the interests of the poor in our society.

Senator Hébert: He has been with the wealthy far too long.

Senator Molgat: It is obvious that Senator Bolduc is the only one. He is the one who was assigned the task of presenting this bill; an ill-advised initiative, it seems to me, since the objections have been coming from his own province, the ones we heard in the Conservative caucus anyway, and he is the one whom they picked for the unpleasant job of presenting this bill.

[English]

Honourable senators, it is extremely surprising. Not one single member on the other side to defend this bill. Not one, except the sponsor of the bill!

Senator Bonnell: Big business!

Senator Perrault: Just a bankruptcy!

• (1610)

Senator Molgat: Yet, if one has listened to the interventions on this side, one can only conclude that the objections to the bill have been very well presented. It is one more Tory step in making the poor, those who are least able to pay for the extravagances of this government, pay for the vast sums of money that this government has squandered. It is picking on the most unfortunate in our society — those who need, for example, unemployment insurance and many other programs — to settle the problems of the finances of this country.

Senator Simard: What is your alternative?

[Translation]

Senator Molgat: Well, Senator Simard, if you want the floor, please rise, by all means.

Senator Frith: Come on, Senator Simard.

[English]

Senator Simard: I am asking a question.

Senator Frith: What is the matter? Are you stuck in your seat by glue or something? Can't you stand up? If you stand up, will your chair be stuck to your you-know-what?

[Translation]

Senator Molgat: Come on, Senator Simard, take the floor. Be my guest!

[English]

Senator Perrault: They are ashamed of the bill.

Senator Molgat: There can be millions for the big corporations, and that does not affect my friends across the way one little bit, but when it comes to the deficit, the poor and the working poor in this country must pay.

Therefore, my honourable friends, it is with great regret that I see this bill proceeding, and that my honourable friends opposite are not prepared to take amendments, either in the other place or, I presume, here from the way they are proceeding. They have proceeded in the other place as they have here — again using the guillotine to force this measure down the throats of Canadians. This bill is a bad piece of legislation, and it is most regrettable that the government is pushing it through in this way.