

province. I was not disappointed, because the government of 1970, under Mr. Hatfield, proceeded with further social measures. Two of my former colleagues in the legislature of New Brunswick have joined me in this chamber. They are the Honourable Senator Robertson and the Honourable Senator Simard. I must say that I was pleased that, in spite of the fact that their party had fought politically what we tried to do between 1960 and 1970, once it formed the government, it continued and improved upon some of the measures that we had begun. The people of New Brunswick, as has been pointed out by Senator McElman, recognized that and continued to re-elect that party in three or four consecutive elections.

In 1984, after a long period during which the Liberal Party had formed the Government of Canada, there arrived on the scene a politician who took this country by storm. He became the leader of the Conservative Party. He went from one end of the country to the other, saying to the people of Canada that it was time for a change—saying to the people of Canada that they did not have to worry about such change, that every bit of social legislation that had been put in place by the previous governments would be a sacred trust to him and that, not only would he continue with those programs, but he would improve upon them.

Honourable senators know that the people of Canada believed him. This is why I am speaking today. The government had only just assumed power when we started to hear rumblings. Honourable senators, in all political parties—at least, it has been my experience that this is so—there are the conservative thinkers and there are those who think more liberally. But, like the majority of Canadians, I believed that the Prime Minister was a liberal thinker. I believed him. He came from humble beginnings; he had worked his way up the ladder, and I believed that he recognized that there are people in this country who need the assistance of the government. I presume, without knowing this for a fact, that there must have been a heck of a battle in that caucus. But, to my despair, I believe that the right-wingers have won.

Honourable senators, I am concerned about that. I am concerned because there are all kinds of signs that the entire spectrum of the social life of this country is being placed in jeopardy. We know that the country has gone through a recession over the past four or five years. We know that the deficit is high—too high. We know that the government has had to restrain expenditures. As a matter of fact, that restraint began before this government took over. But the leader of the Conservative Party, who is now the Prime Minister of this country, has said to the Canadian people that although the government will cut expenditures, it will never do that on the backs of the poor, the weak and the unemployed. But that is not what has happened. I am surprised at this, and I plead with my colleagues—especially those I know on the government side of the chamber, two of whom I named earlier—people who I know have a social conscience. How can they, in good conscience, support this kind of legislation? As I have said, this is a great worry to me. We had a good example of this policy in connection with old age pensions and in connec-

tion with unemployment insurance. We have a concrete example of it in this bill, which, I presume, will be passed. At every turn, at every corner, there is a demonstration by this government that it will cut expenditures and that it will do so on the backs of those who cannot afford it. I think that that is wrong. I believe that this country can afford the kind of social legislation that we have. I believe we can afford still better social legislation. I am worried, and I think I express not only my own fear but that of all seniors in this country. Right now, the seniors in this country are wondering what will happen in the February 26 budget. They do not trust the Prime Minister any more. He gave them his word two years ago; he did not keep his word. The government tried to reduce the amount paid to old age pensioners with another piece of legislation. They did not succeed, but the threat is there, and this is important.

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Now the people who are in need, especially single mothers and the poor people who need this measly little cheque of \$30 per month that they receive, are wondering what will happen. They are worried not only that it will not increase, because it could very well not increase at all if the inflation rate is below 3 per cent, but they are wondering whether, in fact, the government will keep that program. I say to you, honourable senators, that if you examine the social programs of any given country, you will find that over the years those programs that have been established solely for the poor have become poorer programs. That is why universality is important and I tell you, honourable senators, that if you take a program and you fit it only to those who are really in need, what happens is that the majority of the taxpayers who, over the long haul, do not receive any benefit from that program will put pressure on governments, because governments are formed by politicians who must be elected, and, therefore, those programs will, year by year, become less and less. That is why I am so proud to have been and still to be a Liberal, because the Liberal Party saw that happening years ago. I say to you, honourable senators, that to me this philosophy of giving just a little bit to the poor is apparent throughout the operation of this government. I see it in the cuts to regional development programs.

Today, in February of 1986, and for the last year, the economy has come back. Jobs have been created, and I do not blame the government or the Prime Minister for taking credit for those improvements. When jobs are scarce and unemployment is high, governments are blamed and that is a fact of life. Not that I really believe that governments can create jobs, but that is the way it is.

However, I asked my colleagues from the Atlantic provinces to look at the situation as it exists today in New Brunswick, in Nova Scotia, in P.E.I. and in Newfoundland. The situation in those provinces today is worse than it was in 1981 and in 1982. The unemployment rates are higher and the need for social programs is greater; the need is greater for a more generous Unemployment Insurance program and for all kinds of social programs. I ask you, honourable senators, what is to happen to the Atlantic provinces?