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# Congress of the United States

## U.S. House of Representatives

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March 9, 2005

## Stop Putting Words in the late Senator Moynihan's Mouth!

Dear Colleague:

Since the Bush Administration cannot find even one Democrat currently in office that agrees with them on Social Security, they have resorted to mentioning a few people who once were Democrats in Congress but who are no longer here and, in some cases, are no longer alive.

Even in these cases, the assertion that these Democrats would agree with what the White House is now proposing for Social Security is highly dubious. The most common references are to my dear departed friend, my Senator from New York, Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Senator Moynihan was an independent thinker, and almost nobody could predict exactly what he would think about any given issue at a particular time in history. That's why it is disrespectful when those currently advocating the privatization of Social Security assert that Senator Moynihan would agree with them or take a quote of his out of context.

For example, on NBC News' "Meet The Press" on Sunday (march 6), Senator Mitch McConnell quoted Moynihan as once saying "no one is privatizing Social Security" and then went on to say, "Now, that's Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Democratic expert on Social Security. I wish he were still alive to be here and make that statement himself. Why do we have to keep using that word?"

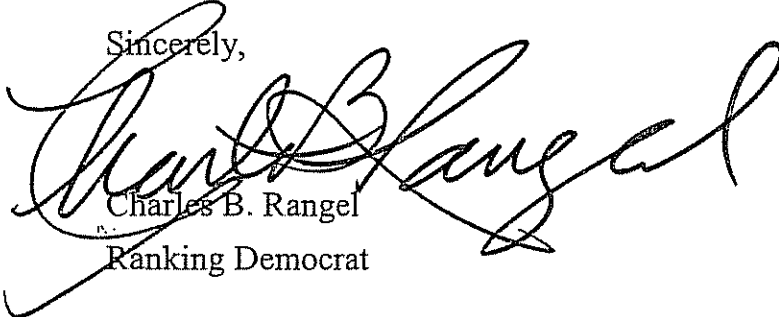
However, Senator Moynihan is not here today, and Senator McConnell cannot say that Senator Moynihan would make that statement about what the White House is currently advocating. We do know Senator Moynihan did not shy away from using that word "privatization" when he felt it fit, and he often reminded us that there are many out there who have never believed in Social Security and seek to get rid of it.

In January of 1997, he wrote in the New York Times about how an Advisory Council on Social Security on which he did not serve had “effectively agreed to privatize the system in all or part.” He argued at Harvard in April of 1998 that “As the 1990s arrived, and the long stock market boom, the call for privatization of Social Security all but drowned out the more traditional views.” And, he warned in the Washington Post in August, 1996, that once the 1996 Welfare Reform Bill was enacted, “do not doubt that Social Security itself, which is to say insured retirement benefits, will be next. The bill will be called ‘The Individual Retirement Account Insurance Act. Something such.’”

In an April 1998 piece in U.S. News & World Report, Senator Moynihan wrote that there was “a powerful set of distinguished academics and political activists who would turn the 60-year-old system of Social Security retirement, disability, and survivor's benefits over to a system that depends solely on personal savings invested in the market. There are those who hold the belief--doctrinal in many ways--that the experience of stock market investors in a time of great economic growth can easily be applied to an entire population. Some adherents to this philosophy believe Social Security is a failed plan that perhaps should never have been put in place and should now be ‘transitioned’ out, as the new term has it.”

I truly do not know exactly what Senator Moynihan would say about the current privatization proposals coming out of the Bush Administration, the Heritage Foundation, CATO, or other allied groups that claim he would agree with them were he alive today. However, I would refer you to a piece (attached) by Senator Moynihan’s only daughter, Maura, from last Sunday’s Daily News in which she writes: “There is a fundamental difference between Sen. Moynihan’s view of Social Security and that of the White House.”

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Charles B. Rangel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large loops and flourishes.

Charles B. Rangel  
Ranking Democrat

**New York Daily News - <http://www.nydailynews.com>**

**Don't take his name in vain**

By MAURA MOYNIHAN

Sunday, February 27th, 2005

In recent months, President Bush has continuously invoked my father, Sen Daniel Patrick Moynihan, as a purported champion of the White House plan to privatize Social Security. As my father is sadly no longer present to explain his views, I read through his writings to set the record straight

There is a fundamental difference between Sen. Moynihan's view of Social Security and that of the White House. My father was committed to honoring the contract the government made with its citizens

I think daily of his defense of the poor and the middle class, and his disdain for ideologues who would rip apart the safety net. In 1983, he wrote: "Cut back Social Security in desperation, and you abandon a solemn promise of the Democratic Party and of American society. This promise, once broken, will fracture society "

Today's debate parallels the battles of the 1980s. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan got tax cuts for special interests and created the largest federal deficits in history, up to that point. My father made his concerns clear: "The President's men really did believe that if you had a big tax cut, you would get a big increase in revenues ... now that they realized that their tax magic wasn't going to work, they tried another magic. They would convince everyone that the Social Security system was going bankrupt "

He went on, "These were the views of extreme conservatives who really had just never accepted the legitimacy of government-sponsored social insurance "

Moynihan believed that the deficits were deliberately created to attack benefit programs. In 1981, House leader Thomas (Tip) O'Neill of Boston, known in our house as "The Tipster," rejected Reagan's plan to drastically cut Social Security. Two years later, thanks to my father and his friend, Sen Bob Dole, taxes and benefit adjustments were adopted that secured the system's solvency until 2060. President Reagan signed the bill in the Rose Garden, with Dole and Moynihan peering over his shoulder. I keep this photo on my wall.

In 1989, however, dismayed that the surpluses were being used to finance deficits, my father wrote: "There is an issue of integrity here. Thou Shalt Not Purloin Pension Funds ... These are Trust Funds. They are not to be spent for purposes other than for which they are deposited - and held in trust."

Which bring us to the present. President Bush invoked my father's name in a debate with John Kerry and in his State of the Union address. But President Bush failed to clarify that Moynihan proposed individual accounts as "add-ons" that would supplement Social Security, not as "carveouts" that would replace the funds.

In his 2001 Report of the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security, Moynihan wrote: "These accounts could be financed by the individual worker voluntarily adding 1% of his pay on top of the present 6.2% employee share of the payroll tax. The government could match the employee's contribution with a matching 1% of salary, drawn from general revenues." Extolling the "magic of compound interest," he proposed investments to create "an estate! For doormen, as well as those living in the duplexes above."

Does Bush seek to protect the 35 million men, women and children who depend on Social Security or to loot the trust fund to feed the deficit or satisfy right-wingers who never believed in government-sponsored social insurance?

Dad was fond of reminding us - whether at the dinner table or on the Senate floor - that Social Security was "special to New Yorkers" because its creators, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Sen. Robert Wagner and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, were "gifts to the nation from our Empire State."

As a single mother, I fear for the survival of the social programs given to us in a precious trust. Let us defend the legacy of Roosevelt, Perkins, Wagner and Moynihan, lest society become irreparably broken.

*Moynihan is director of the Moynihan Station Citizens Group*