

In the area of aid to students, for example, there is talk of privatization. We really wonder where it is leading, how it will be done and what it will achieve. We find the 3 per cent tax on student loans deplorable. The government indicated that it would be removed, but when? We also realize that the government added six months of interest to student loans. They are ready to go ahead with that, but they are not prepared to cancel the 3 per cent that they had promised.

As I just said, I have the feeling that the rhetoric and intentions were quite laudable. I believe that they wanted to do the right thing, but this government has had big problems in this area. I therefore suggest that it look carefully at this bill in order to make up a little.

[English]

Bill C-300 is intended to try to help those Canadians with learning disabilities who may need additional assistance to be able to get it when they do not have the financial resources. There would be some incentives, some ways in which very often the parents, although it is not always the case, would be able to get some financial assistance from some level of government.

We know, as my colleague has indicated, that there are as many as 10 per cent of Canadians with learning disabilities and that is without counting people with physical disabilities where there has been significant progress made.

We are talking about children and we are talking about adults as well. These people, as I indicated, often require special assistance. It is not that they are not as able to learn. In some cases they need more assistance in order to be able to start at the same place as others. That is what we are talking about. If we were to do something for them, chances are we could assist them in participating fully in Canadian society.

As I have indicated as well, special assistance is often unaffordable. They simply do not have the means to purchase it. Therefore they need more in order to catch up or in order to keep abreast and they are not in a position to do that. If we do not help, then what is going to happen? Many of us would recognize that these individuals are often among the poorest of the poor in Canada. Therefore, their state of poverty would no doubt deteriorate over time.

We are trying to make sure that they, just like their neighbours, have not only the same access but the same

possibilities of completing this race if you wish to complete their education.

We have spoken about education as the provincial jurisdiction. Everyone knows that. But there is nothing preventing us from co-operating with other levels of government. In fact, my colleagues would acknowledge that that is essential. In fact the more co-operation there is, the more Canadians benefit.

We are talking about ways in which we can look at this and a number of other problems where we can in fact do the job better than we are doing it today. That will always be a challenge for all governments, not just this government, always to try to improve on that which we have built. That is the challenge today.

We have a specific problem we are given to deal with. There are a number of others that I have identified. If we get governments working together, we could do a much better job than we are doing.

I found it interesting that my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, indicated that if certain parents or their children are not getting assistance with particular learning disabilities and are not being responded to appropriately by school boards they might be in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is probably quite so. It is really unfortunate. I know my colleague is going to agree with my comment. I can see him smiling already.

• (1730)

The Court Challenges Program has been eradicated, blown out of the water. It was a mechanism whereby the Canadian citizen could say: "These are the rights that I have and this Court Challenges Program is going to make sure that they are being respected".

This program—and I am sure my colleague will acknowledge that; he will probably want to get up and make a special statement on that—would have been extremely useful for situations such as this one.

How can the federal government help if it chooses to? I have indicated co-operation. That is an essential ingredient. It could introduce through its income tax laws deductions or credits. It could make them available to individuals. I am sure that would be applauded. I am not terribly afraid of any premier saying that it is a naughty thing to do, that it should not be doing that if it is trying to help people in their respective jurisdictions get additional assistance so that they could compete and participate fully in society. I do not see many people jumping up and down and saying that is not the right thing to do.