

Government Orders

Mr. Milliken: As my colleague says, he is a Tory, but our expectations still must be reasonable; perhaps not high but at least reasonable. However, I do not think we have even reason from this particular minister in these particular budgets.

Mr. Edwards: Remember Allan and Marc Lalonde.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member opposite is hollering about a very capable former Liberal finance minister. He would do well to have his minister follow that example. The Solicitor General wants me to name a famous Liberal finance minister. We have two who are members of this House right now who come immediately to mind. The Leader of the Opposition was a very famous Minister of Finance and the former Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, was a very famous Minister of Finance who had a balanced budget.

Mr. Edwards: The last one ever.

Mr. Milliken: As the hon. member says, the last one ever. This is all the more reason for him to be raised on a pedestal and cast in bronze. I invite hon. members opposite to see that a suitable statue is erected to the memory of this great man who is a former leader of our party and is now serving this House in the distinguished position as member for Vancouver Quadra.

I now wish to turn to Bill C-93 which the government feels offers some salvation. There are points in the bill with which we in this party are in accord. We think some of the changes are worth while. We do not always dump on everything the government does, contrary to popular expectation and certainly popular perception.

However, the points that we are in agreement with are relatively narrow ones. We concede that the winding up of the directorate of the Veterans Land Act and consolidating that work with the deputy minister's office is a sensible change, especially when no new grants under that act have been available since 1975.

We are also willing to acquiesce in some of the other mergers that are proposed in the bill. However, there are a couple that warrant very close scrutiny and ought not to take place. I want to speak specifically about the

proposal to merge the Social Science and Humanities Research Council with the Canada Council.

My constituency is one that boasts very capable people in both fields who would be touched by this bill. Kingston has a very vibrant cultural community which benefits from the grants that are given by the Canada Council. Kingston has writers, painters, musicians, artists of all kinds who benefit from these grants, who are recipients of these grants. There are publishing companies that operate in Kingston and receive these grants to help them publish books that would otherwise be unavailable to the Canadian public.

The work of the Canada Council is vital and important. We have witnessed under this government cutbacks in the council's funding until recently when I understand there was some additional money provided.

The fact is the Canada Council has not fared well. Clearly the Conservative government regards culture as an optional extra. When it comes to dealing with things it feels government should do, it looks more at running a post office or road building and running a government like a business than it does in looking at things that are important for the self-expression of our people and that is in the arts.

The arts community in Canada is very important for our cultural and national identity. It is a very important method of self-expression for Canadians. It helps us realize our true identity as Canadians in operating and carrying on our separate existence on the North American continent. Any attempt to stifle or lessen the importance or the vibrancy of Canada's cultural community is a serious move and one that the government it seems to me has undertaken cavalierly and without due regard to the consequences throughout the eight years that Canadians have suffered badly under the government opposite.

In speaking in its defence there has been no particular change. However, there will be a subtle one to the Canada Council in that it will now take over responsibility for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

That body operated for quite a different purpose and that was to grant funding to researchers involved in the social sciences. Sometimes there was overlap. Sometimes the social science research impinges on cultural matters, but generally speaking it does not. It generally deals with things in terms of sociology and politics and