

Honourable senators, those comments were made not about Bill C-76, but in reference to yesterday's provincial budget in New Brunswick.

I sent a telegram to Premier McKenna this morning congratulating him on the general thrust of his budget.

Senator Frith: How embarrassing.

Senator Simard: One can agree or disagree with that provincial budget, but I believe that Premier McKenna and his government are doing exactly what the Mulroney government has attempted to do for the last seven or eight years. So those comments are not about Bill C-76, but they happen to be timely.

Senator Frith: A not very elegant insult.

Senator Simard: Those comments happen to reflect criticisms generally heard in the streets of New Brunswick today because the McKenna government has aligned itself with the federal loan program and has cut the provincial subsidy program by 66 per cent.

Senator Frith: Talk about a kiss of death. There goes Mr. McKenna's budget.

Senator Simard: There must be measures that governments can implement. There must be measures that the Liberal opposition in this place can support. How can Bill C-76 and the elimination of the six-month interest free holiday be so terrible when seen in the light of what a provincial Liberal government has done?

Mr. Allan Mahar, the Minister of Finance for New Brunswick, in trying to explain the position he was in and what led to his decision, said that the change will result in improved access to financial assistance for students.

Honourable senators, it is good to be partisan, and I can be as partisan as anyone in this house, but I would hope that the Liberal senators for once see the light and oppose this amendment, as we opposed the previous amendment of Senator Perrault's.

This amendment is, on the part of the Liberal opposition, another smoke screen. This exercise amounts to nothing more than grandstanding. They are trying to mislead Canadians into believing that only the Liberal Party of Canada thinks that deficits can be reduced, taxes lowered and social programs maintained as originally planned in the 1970s before all governments spent and borrowed.

For those reasons, reasons that are obviously supported and shared by the McKenna government, a Liberal government, I

plead with my colleagues on both sides of this house to reject the amendment for what it is — just another smoke screen.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. Norbert Thériault: Honourable senators, I am sure that the Premier of New Brunswick received today the first kiss of death — a telegram from Senator Simard congratulating him for what he is doing in New Brunswick. He is looking over the budget again to see what he has done that deserves such congratulations.

Senator Marchand: April fools.

Senator Thériault: New Brunswick will be the only province, apart from Quebec, with at least a small bursary program. That bursary program can be added to the total loan a student can obtain, which was frozen at \$3,300 in 1984, if my memory serves me correctly. No wonder people are writing articles like the one Senator Simard has quoted. There is a lot of truth in what is being said in that article.

As I said, the total loan available under the Canada Student Loans Program was frozen at \$3,300 in 1984, and since that time and the Minister of Finance has twice promised to increase that limit. In New Brunswick, students were able to continue their studies because, on top of that loan, there was a bursary program of up to \$2,700 available to students in need. If my figures are correct, next year in New Brunswick all a student will be able to obtain will be one-third of that \$2,700, or \$900.

Is the government prepared to promise the students of New Brunswick that it will provide jobs for them this summer; students who have nothing but the \$3,300 loan plus the \$900 that may be available in bursaries? They come from poor families, from Senator Simard's region as well as mine. Is Senator Simard or are the Tory senators prepared to sign these students' notes at the bank so the students can go to university? No. None of us can. I could not do it. I am sure not too many people could do that.

There is a deliberate plan afoot to keep some students from continuing their post-secondary education on the same level as other students. Senator Simard is the first one to recognize that. I will quote from a letter penned by him. This is the second time Senator Simard has done this since I have been in this place.

When we travelled around Nova Scotia on the UI bill, Senator Simard made statements to the unemployed, leading them to believe that he would get amendments to the bill, or he would not support it. After all was said and done, Senator Simard got no amendments to the bill. In fact, he supported it!

Senator Olson: Shame!