

Government Orders

In British Columbia the Liberals have jumped into bed with the Tories, the Reformers, the Flat Earth Society and a bunch of other right wing crazies, basically on a negative program to keep the New Democratic Party, the largest party in British Columbia, out of power.

Mr. Milliken: They have succeeded abundantly.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): That is all this member is concerned about. This is Liberal type legislation. It is being demanded by two of the paramount Liberals in British Columbia, one a former leader and one an aspiring leader of the Liberal party.

I do not want to say that it is entirely Liberal legislation, because it is being presented by the Tories in the House today. In British Columbia the Liberals go to bed with the Tories in order to keep the NDP out of office. That is a bit of a problem, but here we are involved in a bit of a public dispute between the two parties.

The simple fact is that the Liberals and the Tories believe in precisely the same kind of attack on social programs and that is why they are going to vote against the motion that has been presented by my colleague from Saskatoon. They know that the huge Tory majority in the House is going to pass this legislation, and by voting against this motion, they are saying that once it is passed, it is going to be implemented right away.

That is exactly what members are doing by voting against this motion and they know it. I think they have received phone calls from Bill Vander Zalm and Mel Couvelier instructing them on this motion.

Mr. Milliken: How can you say that with a straight face? This is silly nonsense.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): This is dangerous legislation. We have always been told by the government opposite that we have to cut the deficit in order to protect social programs. The government says if we do not cut the deficit, if we do not cut the debt, we are going to constantly be paying out from the public treasury to the bankers, the bond holders and the people who hold the debt of this country and we are not going to be able to sustain the social programs at the levels and quality we want in this country.

The Prime Minister has called social programs a sacred trust. He says he wants to cut the deficit and the debt in order to maintain these social programs. He does

not mean a word he is saying. The Tory program in this country has all along been absolutely identical to the Tory program of Margaret Thatcher. It has been identical to the mean-spirited Tory program of Ronald Reagan. There is absolutely no difference between this and the attack on social programs that has taken place in the United States under Reagan and in Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher. The real ideological movement behind Bill C-69 is that the Tories do not like social programs and that is all there is to it.

There are other methods of cutting the deficit and we have proposed some of them. Just the other weekend the Secretary of State for External Affairs suggested that maybe we should cut back some of the troops in Europe or cut back some of the armaments, those obsolete nuclear arms that are only designed to hit Poland and Czechoslovakia, countries who now suddenly find themselves on our side.

• (1740)

We could cut back on those things and save billions of dollars. Then we can maintain the social programs that we have to their present quality and extent and possibly even expand those programs so that they actually do the job they are designed to do.

My daughter is graduating from high school now in British Columbia. She is going to be going to university. Because British Columbia is not a major contributor to the cost of post-secondary education, the cost of going to university is going to be more than my daughter can afford. If she was going to school in Quebec she would be paying one-third of the tuition fees that she would be paying in British Columbia.

Now the government is freezing EPF funding so that there can be absolutely no increase in the amount of money going into post-secondary education in that province. More and more money will have to come from the students themselves and more and more students will fall below the cut-off line and will not be able to afford to go to university.

That is the kind of mean-spirited Tory policy that we see in this legislation. By passing this motion we will be able to delay this legislation long enough, especially if the odd sensible Tory member on the opposite side supports it, that it will be null and void and have no effect.