

Government Orders

The same provincial government that invited these cuts is now attempting to sue the government for doing what it asked it to do. One wonders why people laugh derisively at the Government of British Columbia. Well, here is an example of why. The only people who are not laughing are the people of British Columbia, because they are being doubly punished by the initiatives of these two governments.

Nineteen billion dollars is transferred annually to the provinces under these plans. Under Bill C-69 that will be cut by \$7.3 billion between now and 1994-95. That is a sizeable reduction.

What has happened and is happening is that the government's deficit reduction measures are almost exclusively based on the cuts to social programs. I know the ears will perk up across the way, but it all fits in.

It talks about the plan under the free trade agreement, the same free trade agreement that the government promised to the people of Canada would not cut social programs. The free trade agreement is behind all of this. The effect of Bill C-69 will be to cut that \$7.3 billion. The free trade agreement, in keeping with this, is the whole backdrop.

The government says that it is cutting to reduce the deficit. I think everyone is in favour of reducing the deficit. We have our own suggestions on how that should happen. It has to do with a reduction in interest rates. What is really happening is that the cloak behind the cuts to social programs is deficit reduction, but the justification is really to get the government off the backs of business so they can compete with American companies. That is the link to the free trade agreement.

The government promised that the poor, the sick, and the elderly would not be affected by the trade deal. We see just the opposite. What the government promised in the election of 1988 is not what is occurring now.

This government, in keeping with that, is also on a privatization kick. This is once again where British Columbia is being doubly punished, because the same dynamic is occurring in British Columbia.

The free trade agreement provides for the U.S. to have equal access for private health care management services. We have in my province right now a deplorable lack of health care services, where people are forced to go the United States to receive emergency open heart

surgery. This is the same government that invited these cuts to Established Programs Financing.

This reminds me of a quote from Oscar Wilde. I will paraphrase it. The government both in Ottawa and Victoria knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

Under the Canada Assistance Plan the federal government is required to provide funds on a fifty-fifty cost-shared basis. We in my party believe that the tax system should be a redistributive mechanism. We are committed to that. That is one of the reasons we are who we are. We believe in national programs. We believe in them being equitably distributed across Canada.

In this current constitutional crisis we are experiencing, we are the party that is most upset at what is going on, because it is the national programs and the financing of those programs that are in jeopardy if our country should fall apart.

The member of the legislature for my riding is also the finance minister for British Columbia. He is the guy who is implementing the cuts. He is readjusting his budget because of cuts to the Established Programs Financing and the cap on CAP. It is interesting because of what his premier, his boss, had invited. It is now causing him no end of torment because he is seeing the effects of the invitation. That is British Columbia politics for you, Madam Speaker.

• (1650)

I have a button that I sometimes wear given to me by the hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam. It says: "Has the world gone mad, or is this B.C.?" It is the whole mindset of the premier saying: "You must do this in the interest of deficit reduction". Then when the government does it, they say: "Wait a minute, we didn't really mean that", and when it is followed through, the provincial government sues the federal government. It is like a Monty Python show.

As I said, the only people who are not seeing the joke of it all are the people of British Columbia. I hope they have the courage to junk the Socred government along with its idea of deficit reduction and elect the New Democratic Party in the next provincial election. That would go a long way to serving the interests of British Columbians because we have a plan. We know how to operate an economy in a much more responsible manner than the Social Credit government. The New Democratic Party also knows how not to invite disaster on our