

## **Kilgour sees same-sex marriage leading to incest, polygamy**

But MP and junior cabinet minister must show backbone, moral leadership

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Legalizing same-sex marriage could lead to the acceptance of polygamy and incest, says David Kilgour, the Liberal MP for Edmonton Southeast and the Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific region.

I spoke to Kilgour Thursday afternoon, the day after he held a town hall meeting in his riding, to explain to his constituents why he ducked a controversial vote on same-sex marriage in the House of Commons in September. For two months, Kilgour has been silent on the matter, refusing to talk to the media about why he failed to show up for the vote, or about his own views about gay marriage.

On Thursday, Kilgour told me that he opposes gay marriage, in part because, he says, once the government made same-sex marriage legal, it would have no logical reason not to allow three people to get married.

"So you're saying your fear is that gay marriage could lead to legalized polygamy?" I asked him, puzzled.

"And, I'm afraid, and I'm not the only one afraid of this, it could lead to mothers marrying sons and all kinds of things," he responded.

It wasn't what I expected to hear from a respected parliamentarian and junior cabinet minister -- especially not on the same day that Canadian Alliance MP Larry Spencer was disciplined by his party for suggesting that homosexuality ought to be recriminalized.

Kilgour has always had a reputation as a maverick, a defender of the little guy, as a strong moral leader who stood up for his own personal values, as a social liberal, a friend to immigrants, refugees, the poor and the oppressed.

But on gay marriage, he's been sending very mixed signals. While he's never supported gay marriage, he's never before come out strongly against it. When the Canadian Alliance moved its mischievous motion in support of traditional, heterosexual marriage -- a move designed to embarrass the Liberal government caucus which is divided on the issue -- Kilgour was nowhere to be seen.

I support same-sex marriage. But Kilgour's behaviour seemed to me an act of hypocrisy.

If he, and his constituents, were so opposed to gay marriage, I asked him, why hadn't he at least shown up and put his abstention on the record or even voted with the Alliance?

"I told the prime minister I could not go and support his side of the motion, and frankly, I thought he was going to throw me out of cabinet over that," Kilgour told me. "We assumed that since I'd been ordered to show up for the vote, and I didn't show up for the vote, I would be out of cabinet. So I thought that was showing some backbone."

Kilgour said that it would have seemed like grandstanding, if he'd shown up and abstained, or voted with the Alliance. Not coming to the House, he said, was the middle road, which respected the views of his constituents, who were overwhelmingly, opposed to same-sex marriage.

"People who are married see that their institution is being deconstructed."

But what, I asked him, were his own views?

"My own personal opinion is a complicated one," he told me. "There are an awful lot of people who are gay who have suffered all kinds of abuse and what-not and a lot of them, I gather, attempt suicide, and that, as a parent, as a person, bothers me enormously. The last thing I want to do is to create a situation that makes that more common. But there are very, very few

things in society that are really important, and marriage is very important to an awful lot of people in Alberta and in Edmonton and Edmonton Southeast."

But it was then Kilgour raised the bogeymen of legalized incest and polygamy. When a respected Liberal cabinet minister compares a committed gay relationship to an exploitative crime like incest or polygamy, he gives aid and comfort to homophobes, whatever his intent.

David Kilgour has built a remarkable reputation in our community as a moral leader. What a tragedy it would be for him squander that legacy now, when moral leadership is so badly needed.

"I just feel that I'm to represent the views of the people of Edmonton Southeast," he told me.

I'm not asking Kilgour to grandstand. I am asking him to show a some real backbone. He's right. The institution of marriage has profound significance to many people, straight and gay. We must treat it with care. But that's why we need leaders, not followers, politicians willing to put their principles ahead of their cabinet careers.

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