

Business of the House

After 42 years as a page he has well earned a rest, but we have been informed that a friend has also invited him to form a partnership in a small business. Mr. Fréchette has a big decision to make ahead. But I know he will bring his special enthusiasm to whatever choice he makes.

What advice would he give to young people today? I would like to quote: "Do anything you can to become a page. It is the best experience in the world and it is wonderful for young people to feel they are contributing to their country".

I am sure his wife, daughter and grandson take special pride in the years that he has given to Canada. I want to express the appreciation and congratulations of Parliament and our personal thanks to chief page André Fréchette. We will all miss you.

Also, we would like to extend our best wishes on the retirement of Mr. Leo Robitaille who has served Parliament here since 1953, and Mr. Sam Renaud since 1954. We wish you the best of everything in your retirement and the best of the season.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a rather special day for me. As you know, I am the only staff member of the House of Commons ever to have been elected to this place since Confederation. That I consider special. What is even more special today is to say to you and to hon. members that I have had the opportunity of working with all three people we are honouring this afternoon.

[Translation]

At one time I worked in the parliamentary restaurant like Mr. Léo Robitaille, who is being honoured today. As a member of this House, I have always known and worked with Mr. André Fréchette. I also came to know Mr. Renaud.

• (1510)

If I could pretend for an instant that I am still an employee of the House of Commons, as I was a long time ago, I would like to tell these three men that the members of the House wish them the very best. I am sure that, in my imaginary capacity as an employee of this House, I also speak for all the employees of this House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[English]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I too would like to wish Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Fréchette and Mr. Renaud a very happy retirement and also thank them very much for their service to this House and to generations of parliamentarians and to young people throughout the years.

[Translation]

I want to wish them a happy retirement.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, there are many other employees in the House of Commons who are going to retire.

[English]

I would like to also thank all of those other employees of Parliament who are taking retirement on January 1 and to thank them as well for their service to this Parliament.

The Speaker: Léo, André and Sam, at long last the Speaker gets to speak. My colleagues, today is a very special day. It is very special for all of us because in a very real sense we who serve in this House and the people who help us to discharge our duties as parliamentarians know full well of the pressures and demands that are placed on all of us. I include here the officers of this House.

Today as we say goodbye to Léo and Sam, I must say that I had hoped in my tenure to never be able to avail myself of your services, but already once I have had to call upon you when one of our members would not withdraw. I have forgiven him long since.

My colleagues, today also we say goodbye to André Fréchette. I ask the pages who are here today to come and stand around the Chair. There have been many pages that André has worked with and whom he has helped over the years.

[Translation]

I am happy to see you are all here, our pages, my pages, the pages of all Canadians.

[English]

It is indeed fitting that at this time of the year, as we prepare to go home, as we prepare ourselves indeed to be with our families and friends that we, the family that is Parliament, and most especially these three men who are leaving us today, would say to them, and I do today claim my right to speak on behalf of all parliamentarians when I say to you: Thank you for a job well done. We appreciate you very much.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[Translation]

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Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ) Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that I could dispense with the Thursday