

Routine Proceedings

have served an extended period of time and some have served in particular capacities. If I remember correctly there are some 60 of us who are retiring. Although I cannot name them as individuals I would like to thank each of them and say that I genuinely believe that they have served their constituents and their nation well. I personally regret that we have not devised a more appropriate way to recognize their contributions because there is a little bit of a hollow feeling as one leaves.

Having said that I do not want to identify them by name, I do want to make one exception. I want to recognize my friend and namesake, the right hon. Joe Clark, who has been such an inspiration to me. It was partly because of his friendship and partly because of his example that I came to the House of Commons in the first place. Curiously, by happenstance we announced our decision to retire on the same day. For some unexplained and curious reason his decision got much more publicity than mine did. I want to say how much he has contributed to this nation. I wish he and all others who are not returning well as they enter into a more private life. Without exception each of those who are doing so have earned the right to that private life.

I would like to mention my own staff. I will not name them but certainly those who have worked with me these last 10 years have served me well. They are the ones who help our constituents the most. They work in our name but without them we could not do the job we do because we cannot be every place, as sometimes we are needed to be. Although very often our staff go unnamed they are the unsung heroes of the place.

• (2005)

Last but certainly not least, I would like to refer to my own family. I think probably those of us who are here would agree without any difference of opinion whatsoever that without the support of our families we would never have been here in the first place and, second, we could not have remained.

I know in the case of my wife, Barbara, she in a very real sense became a single parent as a result of my decision to go into politics. I thought at the time because my children were 18 and 13 that in a very real sense perhaps my role as a parent had ended and I need not

worry too much about that. I discovered having gone into politics that that was wrong. I feel in a very real sense that I neglected them, that they paid a certain price for my decision to be a parliamentarian. I apologize publicly to them for the times when I was not present when I wish I could have been present and for the role which I would have wished to have played, but I could not always play.

In a very real sense, I think Canadians are well served by those who serve here, irrespective of party. I only hope in the future that Canadians of all walks of life, of all ages, of both sexes, will be anxious to come to this place because it is a very worthy place to be.

Even though we as individuals may not achieve all of our ambitions because that is usually the way in which life operates, I think those of us who have an opportunity to be here will understand that this is a unique role, this is a unique place. It is a privilege to serve Canada. It is a privilege to be a member of Parliament. I am very grateful for the privileges which have been bestowed upon me.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, who was my next door neighbour in the West Block, for a very, very nice presentation. I think he has said totally on a non-partisan basis what each and every one of us would like to have said. Now that he has said it, I guess we do not really need to say it.

I do appreciate his remarks about the friends that we make here, about the sacrifices that our families make and the personal sacrifices that one makes. Yes, it is a voluntary idea to be a member of Parliament and to represent one's constituents in this House of Commons. That does not make it any easier, the fact that we are here. We are all here because we want to be here. We are all here because despite our sacrifices, if you like, and you are included in that as well, Mr. Speaker, we believe we are doing a job for our constituents and for our country. There is no greater feeling of pride and usefulness, despite what the media may say about it and what other opinions may pertain. I am very pleased to be associated with the remarks of my hon. colleague who just spoke who is a very decent and honest person. It has been my pleasure to have been his next-door neighbour.