

*Private Members' Business*

Are we to expect to prorogue soon and come back some time in the new year?

Mr. Speaker, I know you will know about a break when we know. Perhaps Parliament will not be sitting and we will not have an opportunity to recognize National Heritage Day in this House. If this Parliament prorogues and comes back with a new session of Parliament, certainly one of my colleagues or I will make every effort to see that this bill is brought forward again so that we can eventually consider it.

There is a good reason to support the bill today. It is not a very long one. Anyone who is interested can certainly contact my office to obtain a copy of it. It is a five-section bill. We also have coming up in 1992 Canada's 125th birthday, which was recognized in the Throne Speech back in 1989. The government made a commitment at that time that it would be developing considerable activity around what to expect in 1992, Canada's 125th birthday. Throughout the country Canadians in various communities and areas will be celebrating Canada's 125th birthday.

Montreal will be 350 years old. Closer to my home, the Alaska Highway, a very important transportation link between Canada and Alaska, will be celebrating its 50th. If it is not done for 1991, I suggest that this would be perfect legislation to bring forward—and we will even let the government bring it forward—to help all of us celebrate Canada's 125th birthday in 1992. There are opportunities today and in the future to go forward and support this legislation.

In debating the bill it is important to outline a few of the points in the legislation. There has been some debate and discussion. I did appear before the relevant committee to make a submission about why I thought this bill should be deemed votable. I made the submission based on some comments about the cultural history of this country in response to one of the questions asked of me.

Does Canada really need another holiday? What about the lack of productivity that we will suffer in Canada? That is one of the arguments used against this legislation or this proposal. I responded to it this way. I said that it was to the benefit of employers, organizations and Parliament, for the better you are, the more happy a soul

you are, the better a person and the more productive you are going to be.

• (1710)

I took the argument and turned it around. I made the argument that through declaring a National Heritage Day we would actually increase the productivity of the nation, largely by giving people at that time of the year when it is a little dark and a little cold a chance to catch their breath. They will feel all that much better about themselves, about perhaps who they work for, about their communities, about their provinces and about their country. In fact we will gain a great deal from any of the so-called productivity losses that have often been mentioned by critics of this particular proposal.

I would like to read into the record a couple of definitions which I think will be important for people who have been following this debate. It is from clause 4 and I quote the definition of a general holiday. I think is important, given that we are talking about national policy. It reads:

The definition "general holiday" in section 166 of the *Canada Labour Code* is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

"general holiday" means New Year's Day—Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day and includes any day substituted for any such holiday pursuant to section 195;

I did not read the amendment which this bill would make to the Canada Labour Code. That of course would make National Heritage Day a general holiday in Canada, subject to some of the usual rules that we have come to know. I suppose some of them have been bent a little from time to time by employers, employees and others, but the general recognition would be that the third Monday in February would become a general holiday as it is known in the Canada Labour Code.

There are a couple of other sections as well that I should mention. One in particular is a consequential amendment to other legislation. It is always important to give a little background as to how we obtain a day like this and what are the results of that. Often we are at home debating and wondering about our participation in some of these holidays, where they came from, and what is the background to them.