

go unchallenged. But, we also understood that we do not live in a dictatorship; we do not live in a one-party state; we do not live with a president for life. We live in a parliamentary democracy where issues such as this should be properly debated on the floor of this place.

Mr. Speaker, I started to talk about my riding and I will give you a little more background on my riding. I said it had a strong naval tradition, and it has. In my riding we have the air support base, CFB Shearwater. CFB Shearwater was better known, I guess, during the Second World War as RCAF Station Dartmouth. At the present time, CFB Shearwater probably has 1,000 military personnel and 600 to 800 civilian personnel working on that base. The Canadian navy employs thousands of individuals. A lot of those people live in my riding, as I said earlier.

We tried to figure out one day how many people living in the city of Dartmouth and its surrounding area, on the Dartmouth side of the harbour, depended on the Canadian military for a living. We came up with a figure of about 16,000. Sixteen thousand individuals living in my riding are serving in the Canadian Armed Forces and serving proudly. So it is little wonder that on August 22, Alderman Gloria McCluskey from the city of Dartmouth was driven by an overwhelming desire to show support for those military families, for the men, women, and children, who were left behind. She organized, on the Dartmouth waterfront, with very little advance notice, a ribbon tying to show those people who give so much to my community and Dartmouth, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families, that we supported them and that we were going to be with them in this time of uncertainty and that we would like to show our solidarity with them over the coming weeks and months. There were literally thousands of yellow ribbons tied on both sides of Halifax Harbour.

• (1550)

I have been involved in a lot of functions; some fun, some not so fun, and some tragic. Up until that point in time I have never been as moved or as touched as I was at that ribbon tie. There were a lot of tears of uncertainty from spouses and children. The men and women spoke to me that day. It was not a partisan debate. It was a day for support.

### *Government Orders*

They said: "Mr. MacDonald, why do we have to turn on CNN *Headline News* at six o'clock to find out what is going on in the Persian Gulf while my husband, my son, or my daughter is being sent over? What in the name of goodness is wrong with this country when the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, and the government in Ottawa have a gag order on? Why do I have to watch the evening news to find out what Maggie Thatcher, the Prime Minister of England, has said in her House of Commons? Why do we have to rely on foreign media to find out what in the name of goodness our troops were being sent over to fight against and what was going to face them when they were there?"

It is a national tragedy what the government did to those men and women and their families during the period of time until debate took place on the floor of this House. It is a national tragedy. It is shocking.

Until August 22, I had never been involved in an event that was so moving. Two or three days later on August 24, the vessels left Halifax Harbour. I have read a lot about the Second World War and about the role of Halifax in the Second World War, the importance of convoys assembled in Bedford Basin to be sent overseas, many never to return again. I have read about it. I felt it that day when the three naval vessels, the *Athabaskan*, the *Terra Nova* and the *Protecteur* left the harbour.

My colleague from Halifax was there. She can attest to it. It was an incredible afternoon. The three naval vessels did a salute past while we sat on the reviewing stand. There were tens of thousands of individuals from Halifax-Dartmouth and farther afield, from 100 miles away, who came to say to those men and women "Godspeed. We wish you well. We support you. We are concerned just like you are. God bless you all and I hope that you are back real soon". That is why they were there.

There is a member opposite who, if he wants to get into the debate, should perhaps put his name on the list on the other side.

Do you know one of the problems that day? The Prime Minister had a chance to redeem himself. He did not bother to recall Parliament because he was afraid that his political hide would be ripped off him in this place for his policies and blunders through the spring and summer of this year. He did not even bother to show up on the Halifax waterfront to see off those 924 men and women who by his orders were going into a potential theatre of