

Private Members' Business

know. Let us go forward and have grandparents day, which will give the proper recognition they deserve.

• (1740)

The Deputy Speaker: If I understood the hon. member correctly, he has asked for unanimous consent that the order be discharged and that the subject matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Health. Is there unanimous consent among the members present for this to happen?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There was an indication that one of the members does not give unanimous consent to that happening.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the hon. member for Don Valley North for his bill. Indeed, who could be against a bill aimed at honouring the contribution grandparents make to society by designating the second Sunday in September of each year as "National Grandparents' Day"?

Such bills always put us in the same dilemma. On the one hand, there is the honourable intention of designating a grandparent's day but, on the other hand, we wonder if the government will go beyond good intentions and pay close attention on a daily basis to these seniors who helped build our society.

The old age pension plan is a case in point. As you may recall, there have been previous government attempts to reduce seniors' benefits, and a reform of old age pensions is planned for this fall. In every golden age club, people like the directors in my riding who have already retired or will do so in a few years have a lot of questions about their future financial security.

While it is nice of the hon. member to ask that the second Sunday in September be designated "Grandparents' Day", we should be checking with his government to see if the member's wishes will be acted on and whether these seniors will be guaranteed fair and equitable treatment.

This bill also gives us an opportunity to look at the way seniors are treated sometimes. Take for example the voice box issue. Do we really show seniors respect when they need information about a pension cheque that is late in coming or a in different amount than usual, or any other matter, and we cannot provide it to them? Having dealt myself with the voice box at the Department of Human Resources Development, I can tell you that there is cause for frustration, and serious frustration.

I think that we would show much greater respect for seniors and grandparents by remedying this kind of situation effectively

than by simply dedicating one day out of the year to them. We would be showing that we care year-round.

The other example I would like to give you is that of repeated computer errors in recent months. I have received dozens of calls at my office about computer errors, and the problem was from coast to coast. Pensioners were no longer receiving the income supplement they were entitled to. They were not always provided with adequate information in this matter. Again, this is a case where the really respectful thing to do would have been to treat them fairly and with compassion.

At any rate, this bill on grandparents' day is very commendable. We can all dig out an anecdote from our pasts. My paternal grandfather has always been a model of honesty to me. He was a man who wanted the matters he discussed with others to be clear and to get settled. That is something that he taught me and that is now part of my background. Each and every one of us in this House could tell a similar story.

• (1745)

The same is true of my maternal grandmother. I could tell you about her strength of purpose and about how she inspired me through my studies. We have to realize that we are definitely influenced by such role models, and grandparents do make an important contribution to their grandchildren's education. As we get older, we realize the full significance of that contribution, particularly when we know what grandparents have gone through and what a source of wisdom they can be.

Who knows? Having a grandparents' day might trigger a debate on how to better benefit from their experience. I remember my grandfather telling me about voting on conscription during the Second World War, and about the political context of the fifties. The past is a treasure trove of information to help us make decisions, now and in the future.

We often notice that young people lack a sound knowledge of our history. One way to remedy that might be to rely more on the experience of grandparents, who can bring us a lot, in a concrete way, in our daily lives, rather than in terms of our formal history. When we think about the grandparents' contribution, it should not only be in terms of their role with grandchildren, but also with the parents who are sandwiched between the two generations.

In the daily grind of raising children, it is sometimes useful to take time out to turn to grandparents, who have often raised much larger families than those of today and have been through all sorts of situations that have equipped them to give us useful advice.

It seems to me that this bill is a good idea. It is recognition that is only reasonable and which our grandparents deserve. But this recognition should be given in the same spirit year round, it should be reflected in government services for seniors, in our