

*Routine Proceedings*

I am sure I will hold those who serve in the future in equally high regard.

On this occasion it is appropriate that I thank the constituents of Brandon—Souris who elected me in 1983 in a by-election called upon the death of the Hon. Walter Dinsdale and subsequently re-elected me in 1984 and 1988. I thank them most sincerely for the honour they bestowed upon me and for the opportunity they gave me to sit in this Chamber and be a part of the government of this land.

I would also like to thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity he gave me to serve as chairman of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and subsequently as parliamentary secretary to several ministers of agriculture and subsequently to ministers of the environment.

Those opportunities were particularly important because they gave me at least a glimpse of the inner workings of government. I leave with a better understanding of the complexities of decision making and the challenges that face those who hold the highest offices in this land.

I would like to thank the many people who have served us well during the course of the last 10 years. I think of those who have occupied your chair, Mr. Speaker, and I commend you and others for the patience you have exhibited on many occasions because we as a Parliament must surely have tested the patience of many Speakers.

In fact my own daughter was here in this House just a couple of days ago and she left shaking her head and saying that they were not allowed to behave like that in school. Mr. Speaker, I dare say that you and other Speakers have regarded us on many occasions as somewhat unruly school children, or worse.

• (2000)

I tried to remind her that this is a debating society and as it is a debating society we have a unique set of rules. Although I suspect we act excessively on occasion generally speaking we serve the nation well.

I would like to take this occasion to thank the table officers and others who serve the House of Commons because there are many. In all cases they have treated me as an individual member of Parliament with the greatest respect. They are too numerous to mention but I want to refer specifically to the security guards who we

greet as we enter and leave this Chamber on each and every occasion. In their humour and friendliness they personify what is good about Parliament and Canada. I fear all too often we take the contributions which they and others have made for granted.

I would like to make reference to and thank the pages who have served us during the course of the last 10 years. They are very distinguished young people. All of them are first-year students at Carleton University or the University of Ottawa and they combine a heavy workload here with their first-year studies. As someone who has spent most of my life teaching, I have a great deal of appreciation for the challenge which they have undertaken. They have served us well and I know from my conversations with them that they are also very successful students. Those who have chosen them have chosen well, and I thank them for that.

I would like to make reference to the Whip's office and the staff of the Whip's office who are responsible for having us here when we need to be here, and to the government House leader's office with whom I have had the opportunity to work over the years. I would like to make reference to the staff of the agriculture and environment departments because it was a pleasure to work with those many officials. I would particularly like to thank the ministers I had the opportunity to serve. Without exception they were genuine, committed and sincere Canadians who made me as a parliamentary secretary feel an integral part of their process. That was very important to someone whom I would call a backbencher.

To my colleagues who are seeking re-election, and there are some in the room tonight, I wish them well. I congratulate them on their willingness to continue to serve the nation because as a member who has served for 10 years I understand the sacrifice each of them will make. When I say that I include all members of the House, because I feel one of our deficiencies in this House is an excessive amount of partisanship. I know some of it is not real. Some of it is meant for television and I accept that, but I feel the less partisanship we have the better we are as a House and as parliamentarians.

I would like to make special mention of those who are retiring for a variety of reasons. Quite properly we have paid tribute to some of them in the House. Some of them