

*Private Members' Business*

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and an honour to speak in the House this afternoon on my private member's Bill C-288, an act respecting National Heritage Day.

• (1700)

I want to place before the House today a bit of the brief history of National Heritage Day. I also want to talk about some of the recognition that already exists for this bill. As well I want to call upon this House—and I hope the government in particular will endorse it—to support this very important historic legislation.

Bill C-288, an act respecting National Heritage Day, really looks at two or three fundamental areas. The first is a way to recognize the cultural history that we all share from coast to coast to coast or to look at the heritage that we have been raised with. In doing that we would emphasize that in Canada as we have come to know it we do not wish to have a monolithic view of our role in history, our role as citizens of this country. I think this bill will recognize those views and attitudes. It will actually create a National Heritage Day, which would be the third Monday of each February. It would also be a welcome break in the long haul in this northern country from the Christmas break and the festivities for many through to the Easter-time period on the calendar.

There is no question about it. It is a chance for all of us to catch our breath. Perhaps a few rays at that time of the year would probably go a long way toward helping cheer all Canadians, thus giving them a chance to strive to do more work at their workplace, to enjoy their families more, and to continue to participate as full citizens.

Let us take a brief look at how I would argue that National Heritage Day is already recognized but in name. Of course that is what this bill would do. It would officially sanction many different events across the country. We are starting to group together and starting to know our National Heritage Day.

In 1973 the Heritage Foundation Association of Canada really started it all by declaring that the third Monday in February would be an opportunity to reflect back on our cultural heritage and our role as Canadians, our cultural heritage as it relates to many things: our environment, our buildings, and our lives.

It has gone on from there to Alberta, which now recognizes National Heritage Day in its own unique Alberta way as Alberta Family Day. As well, there have been representations in the past to have National Heritage Day, the third Monday in February, recognized as International Peace and Goodwill Day.

Around that time of the year, as we listen to editorials and commentaries on the radio, watch them on television and read them in the newspapers, we realize that many newspapers and media outlets have endorsed the concept of National Heritage Day: *The Toronto Sun*, *The Evening Telegram* and *The Gazette*, to name a few, have all gone on the public record as endorsing and supporting National Heritage Day.

Generally on National Heritage Day we get a message from one of the ministers of the Crown. It is usually the Secretary of State who will make some wonderful comments about his concerns for the country and our multicultural diversity and will give an endorsement to National Heritage Day.

Mr. Speaker, I know you have one of these books as well, but even in the official House of Commons date book which all members of Parliament receive Heritage Day is recognized. I would argue that in essence we are already starting to recognize National Heritage Day. It is my view that my particular private member's bill is going to legislate and put into law what we are already practising.

Parliament was dealing with this bill as early as, according to some references I was able to find, 1980 when the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Ms. Pauline Jewett, a former member of Parliament from my caucus, made a number of motions and representations to have National Heritage Day recognized.

In 1981, the Hon. Stanley Knowles really started the ball rolling in bringing forward motions on a regular basis, trying to recognize and get the concurrence of this House for National Heritage Day.

Perhaps it is a small honour to try to carry on that tradition. If we are unable to have this bill passed by this Parliament today, I will be making every effort in subsequent Parliaments to bring forward this legislation so that at some point in time we can actually legislate it.

There is some rumour, perhaps behind the curtains, about this session of Parliament. Are we going to continue sitting until Christmas? When might we rise?