

Tributes

Mr. Speaker, you will be relieved to know that I do not intend to depart from that habit today. However, perhaps you will allow me to share with you and the members of the House one anecdote relating to my first election to this House of Commons.

Some months after that election, I came to Ottawa on what was to be the first day, the opening of the new session. That morning before the House opened, I decided it would be a good idea if I took a look inside the House of Commons Chamber, where I had never been before. I walked up to the door of the opposition lobby and before I could go in a guard came up to me and very gently but firmly took hold of my arm and said: "Young man, just where do you think you are going?" He was most apologetic when he learned that the guy with the brushcut and the horn rimmed glasses was, in fact, a member of Parliament and was entitled to go into the Chamber to see where his seat was to be, before the House opened that afternoon.

The question the guard asked me at that time is still relevant: Just where did I think I was going? On that fall day, for some so long ago but for me only yesterday, I must say I did not enter the Chamber with a complete game plan for the next 30 years. I did not anticipate the possibility that this occasion would arise. I must say that I did go in expecting to speak and work for my city and my country, to work to implement the program of the party for which I campaigned and also, since I entered through the opposition lobby, to work so that after the next election I would not only come back, but I would be seated on the other side of the House. Well, I guess things have not changed that much after all.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, today is above all a day for me to state my thanks but not just for the warm words that have been expressed. I want to state my thanks for the marvellous opportunities I have had to work with the great leaders of my party. I especially thank my current leader for his words of tribute. I want to express my thanks for having been able to work with the wonderful people of our Liberal caucus.

It is also a time to thank my family, my parents of blessed memory, my wife and children who mean so much to me, for their encouragement and understanding. I also want to thank the Almighty and my constituents for having helped me reach this day.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): I express my appreciation to the people of my community who have supported me and demonstrated their faith in me. Because of this they are sharing with me in whatever words of tribute are being expressed today. Their support has enabled me to spend these years working for them and for our country.

My city of Windsor with its rainbow of peoples, its ability to fight back against difficulty and adversity, its openness and its tolerance, represent for me what is the best and what must continue to be the best about our country, a country of understanding and openness, a country which celebrates its unity through its diversity.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, as you know I am proud to be the son of immigrants, Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. The principles of social justice in my heritage are very important to me.

Looking at the story of my parents and their hopes and aspirations, and looking at my part in that story, makes me want to say to the members of this House that it is only a small part of the larger story of the Canadian dream which is being told and retold every day in this country by the strivings of tens of thousands of people who are working to create better lives for themselves and their families and thereby to build a better country for all of us.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): This is the 125th anniversary of the creation of our country. I want to commit myself again as should we all to continuing to work to preserve and strengthen its unity and strengthen its well-being as the foundation for a better life for all its people.

[*Translation*]

We must all stand together to fight for the unity of our country and for all Canadians.