

*Extension of Sittings*

Tonight, I was supposed to take part in several Christmas parties with my constituents but, given the circumstances, it is much more important for me to be here to speak in their name than to celebrate with their associations.

I wish to thank them for choosing me to represent their interests. However, I am well aware that, in choosing me, they chose my Party, its program and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney).

Since Monday, I have had the privilege of witnessing the free trade debate and, as a new Member, I am learning all the intricacies of our parliamentary system. I stand absolutely in awe of the competent people who have made this debate possible. I understand that it is through confrontation that we achieve progress in a country. Nevertheless, I deeply regret that all sorts of little schemes and tricks are used to avoid dealing with the real issues. However, we have to remember that, throughout history, the Members of the opposition have been true to themselves.

We recall, for instance, that in 1968, the Liberal Party got itself elected on the promise that it would put Quebec in its place, and we saw the War Measures Act invoked. In 1972, to be returned to office, the Opposition solemnly promised that there would never be any income and price control. However, in 1975, we were put under wage and price controls. In 1979, there were great protests because our Conservative Government had proposed a 16-cent gas tax. But no sooner was the Opposition returned to office that they doubled that tax. We must also remember that in 1979, Mr. Trudeau got a fresh mandate by promising renewed federalism, but as early as 1982, we saw once again Quebec alienated through the exclusion of our province from the repatriation of the Constitution. In 1984, the people of Quebec and the people of Canada expressed their contempt for the schemes and about-turns of the Opposition which had no strategy and rushed to borrow those of the Conservative Party.

Again this week I am witnessing all kinds of shenanigans on the part of Opposition Members who want to start a debate over again which, they know, lasted 64 days. I think people should know that my fellow citizens . . . Indeed I would draw the attention of the people of Bourassa to the fact that we are once again facing mistrust. Opposition Parties are playing games, raising and stressing issues which have absolutely nothing to do with the basic question. What we have to ask ourselves in fact is which of two possibilities are we going to choose. And here are these two possibilities: are

we going to prevent a people—the Canadian people in this instance—from flourishing, under the pretence that we have to protect the weakest or most fragile among them, or are we going to protect the weakest while still allowing the stronger citizens to reach their fulfilment? As I see it, if we decide to prevent everybody from growing because we want to protect weaker people, we are headed the wrong way. Thank God, our mothers decided that such would not be the situation. Instead of keeping stronger children in check, they led us by the hand and taught us to walk so we would eventually be able to run.

When the residents of the riding of Bourassa elected me—and again I recall the fact that there had been a long Liberal tradition at both provincial and federal levels—they had decided they would fulfil their aspirations. The elderly people of Bourassa chose to vote for the future of their children and to protect the investments they had made during their years of active life. Older people have opted for free trade. Younger people have opted for better employment opportunities. Minorities chose to have faith in the people who had welcomed them and they voted for free trade. As I recall, the Opposition had said that the people would decide. The people have had their say: *Vox populi, vox Dei!* Free trade it must be.

• (1810)

[English]

**Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin my remarks by thanking the people of Bonavista—Trinity—Conception for having elected me as their representative in the House of Commons. I should also like to thank my family and my team members, without whose help I would not be here today.

I am proud to have the opportunity to participate in this important debate today, and during the course of my remarks I shall endeavour to convey to the House the concerns of my constituents, as related to me during the course of the election campaign.

Given that I rise for the first time in the House of Commons, and given the time of year, I should like to take this opportunity, as a recently retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces, specifically the Navy, to remember those in Canada's Armed Forces who are involved in the protection of this country, and particularly those who cannot be home over the Christmas season.