

*Government Orders*

Mr. Speaker, after six years of Progressive Conservative government, that is where we are, with a repetition of commitments on water and these commitments have not been carried out.

In the same Speech from the Throne is a very important statement, which reads as follows:

The government remains committed to a national child care program.

That commitment has not seen any political expression, in the form of programs, policies, or budget, you name it. Commitment is on paper; it is gone.

Mr. Speaker, it is a zero result from a statement in which many of us who appreciate—and I am sure that many within the government members also appreciate the social importance of a national child care program, which has now been allowed to disappear into the landscape.

There is a reference to refugees in the Speech from the Throne. Unfortunately, the refugee question is, as I mentioned earlier, still a crisis.

In the same Speech from the Throne there is a commitment to revitalize the Citizenship Act. Action on that commitment has unfortunately been zero.

There is a commitment with respect to native people in the Speech from the Throne and, despite the promise of funds, there have instead been cuts to communications and core funding of native organizations.

There is a commitment to a new copyright legislation. The delivery on that commitment has also been zero.

Therefore, we must analyze the situation of unfinished, unkept promises.

• (1230)

One also has to go beyond the Speech from the Throne and beyond what has not happened in the field of an environmental assessment review act, so that today, as we speak, instead of the promised law, we have an Order in Council, which was passed by the Liberal government in 1984 and attempts to regulate that particular environmental situation.

On gun control, there is, again, unfinished business. There is a proposed law in the pipeline from which the government seems to have backed out.

On the question of estimates, because of this open-ended adjournment, there will be three, four, five, six or more weeks ahead of us in which the scrutiny of government expenditures on the part of committees will not take place. That scrutiny is probably the essence of parliamentary activity. It is the essence of the role of elected representatives who are, instead, asked to go back to their ridings. I must stress, in this connection, that the timeframe and the window of opportunity to examine expenditures of budgets of any government department closes at the end of May.

This is the crucial time, because the estimates are produced in March. So you can see that April and May are, for interested parliamentarians, the key months in which to carry out that kind of job on behalf of the Canadian public. That kind of opportunity is almost wiped out.

Might I add, Mr. Speaker, and bring to your attention that the budget debate is incomplete. The House has not approved the budget of the Minister of Finance, so we are adjourning with a budget that has not been voted on. We are asked to adjourn with important unfinished business, called approval of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you more, and bring to your attention what is left unattended to. While we are being asked to adjourn, the important issue of the free trade agreement with Mexico and the United States is on the move. It is in the news and in the works, so to speak.

While President Bush negotiates and discusses with Congress the well-being of American workers, with an eye on their future jobs, social security, and protection of the environment, this government is told to go on vacation.

Does it make sense? While the American political and governmental system is fully absorbed by the question of the proposed trade agreement on the North American continent and the voters' collective attention to ensuring that it is the best possible agreement for the interest of the American workers, we are not paying attention to the collective interest of the Canadian workers, the environment, and the long-term social consequences of this agreement, because it is felt that Parliament ought to close down and that members of all parties ought to go home.