

The name of Joan Neiman and all the colleagues in this chamber who served on that committee will be synonymous with an outstanding report.

In her maiden speech in November 1973, Senator Neiman said that she hoped she would be able to make some effective contribution to her province and to her country through this chamber, in which she was proud to serve. Honourable senators, in response, 22 years later, I would simply say: Joan, you have done much more than that for your province and for your country. The Senate is proud to have had you as a member. All of us offer our thanks and best wishes to you and your family for a happy, healthy and, we know, very active future.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the Leader of the Government has so ably given us the outstanding background and experience of Senator Neiman and her many contributions both in Parliament and outside that there is nothing left for me to do — and I do it with great pleasure — but to join with her to express to Senator Neiman our great appreciation for having given so much of her life to the service of her country.

Much is made about a parliamentarian's maiden speech. Senator Fairbairn correctly focused on the speech made in 1973 by Senator Neiman because it was on the always delicate and controversial topic of capital punishment. She spoke eloquently and convincingly as an abolitionist. However, much must be made of her last speech made here on Tuesday last when she moved the adoption of the report of the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. It confirms that we have had in our midst over the last many years — but not enough years — a person whose concerns and sensitivities have always remained unchanged and which have earned her much deserved admiration.

Her retirement again proves that those who imposed a mandatory retirement age on this place did not think it through thoroughly.

While we will miss her when she leaves us in September, I know that the best wishes of my colleagues are with her in the many active years which are ahead.

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, someone once said that you do not learn seamanship in calm weather. I do not have to tell honourable senators that Joan Neiman has steered the course through many rough waters in her time in this place, never hesitating to explore new channels with her well-known sense of adventure and her equally well-known courage and personal integrity.

It has been mentioned by our leader that Senator Neiman learned all about seamanship when she served with the Canadian navy. Equipped with a gifted legal mind, she has charted new courses in the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs by conducting widely applauded hearings into the controversial areas of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Whenever Senator Neiman speaks, whether in this chamber, in caucus or elsewhere, she is listened to very carefully and attentively, because when she speaks she has something important and worthwhile to say. Those are lessons and examples we can all take to heart in this chamber.

Most importantly, I want to thank Senator Neiman, my seat mate in the early years here, for her friendship, in good times and in bad. Of all her qualities, it has been her good cheer, her warmth and unfailing loyalty that I will always remember and cherish.

[Translation]

Hon. Gérald-A. Beaudoin: Honourable senators, I would like to say a few words about the remarkable contribution made by Senator Joan Neiman to the Senate. I have been in the Senate for seven years, and I have seen Senator Neiman at work in this house, on the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and, for 16 months, on the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide.

A lawyer by profession, she has always had a keen interest in legal issues, criminal law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, federal law generally and, of course, the Canadian Constitution.

Personally, I have always set great store by Senator Joan Neiman's opinion when dealing with bills to amend the Criminal Code of Canada, and heaven knows, we have quite a few of these bills before the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, where the senator's experience and expertise have always been more than welcome.

For 16 months — as the chair of the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide — she dedicated her time, energy and capabilities to solving problems and making recommendations. I have seldom been involved in such an interesting and indeed important committee.

[English]

Senator Neiman and I usually agree on many things — in fact, nearly all things. On the two points where we disagree — that is, on euthanasia and assisted suicide — I must say that her reasoning has always been very strong, respectful and impressive.

Honourable senators, in the field of law, it is impossible to agree all the time. I have always enjoyed a good exchange of views in the field of law. Law is social engineering. It is the civilized way to solve problems in a democracy.

Senator Neiman has proved beyond any reasonable doubt how useful the Senate is in our political and constitutional system. I hope that, on very important subjects, other special senatorial committees will continue to be regularly established. They may follow, and derive many advantages from, the example set by Senator Joan Neiman.