

Summer Recess

separation, and we were able to make a commitment to the people of that province and the people of Canada that a new constitutional framework would be put into place, and they would never have to suffer the kind of threats of separation that we had before. How many generations have had the opportunity to create a new legal framework, to put into place a foundation that will supply, for countless generations in the future, the opportunity to develop a brand new country? It is this Parliament and this government which took that tough decision. We did not back away from it. We put in place not only a new legal framework but a charter of human rights that will defend the rights of ethnic minorities and all kinds of people who have suffered from discrimination.

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We know that members opposite are obviously not in favour of those kinds of measures. They sort of camouflaged their opposition. They say they like a charter of rights but they do not like the way we are going to do it. The argument was very clear and plain. They, who are so mired in their deep reactionary position of not wanting to make a decision that would change the status quo one whit, were afraid to move to a charter of rights that would provide this country with the kind of guaranteed protection of civil liberties that we have long needed, and that would provide a framework for an expansion of freedom in the future. That happens to be a major accomplishment. Every member on this side of the House is proud to have been part of that accomplishment.

Mr. Paproski: Tell us what you have done for women.

Mr. Axworthy: I will come to that. The hon. member for Edmonton North (Mr. Paproski) has never talked about women's rights in his life. Maybe he will give me a chance.

We came here at a time when there was a very serious and difficult issue with the energy programs and policies, or lack of them because the other government which we followed was not able to reach a decision. They could not arrive at a consensus on development. They did not have a made-in-Canada energy policy. They were simply following the dictates of their corporate friends in Calgary and elsewhere in Alberta. We know where their energy policy was made. It was made in the boardrooms of the oil patch. Even then, when it was reflective of that particular corporate interest, they still could not get an agreement with their fellow colleague, the Conservative premier in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Kilgour: What about southern Saskatchewan?

Mr. Axworthy: That paragon of paranoia over in the corner could not convince his premier of Alberta to come to an energy agreement. I suggest that he redirect his efforts westward, because that is where they really belong.

We now have in place an energy policy that is for the benefit of Canadians. It is designed to restore the ownership of our resources to Canadians, to make sure that the development and control and management of our resources will be done by Canadians. That is an accomplishment of which I am proud.

Mr. Kilgour: How many jobs in western Canada have been lost with your policy?

Mr. Axworthy: If I may be allowed just one small digression for the hon. member of paranoia over there, I will point out to him that the last employment figures in the province of Alberta show a decrease in the level of unemployment over the year for the month before, and the month before that. It is the lowest record of unemployment in the province of Alberta in the month of June. I know it is difficult for the hon. member to read figures, but I suggest he go back and look at what is really happening to the economy there.

The problem in the west is not lack of work. It is making sure that we can supply enough workers for all the jobs that will be there. That is the real issue. That comes back to the other kind of tough decision that had to be made. It was to put in place a series of programs and policies that would amount to a major attack upon the problems of industrial economic development in this country.

The hon. member for Portage-Marquette asked about transport. Let me remind him that there is a new harbour policy in place. It will provide for full scale management of our new harbours, for a change. We are now establishing a new air policy in this country.

Mr. Paproski: What about VIA Rail?

Mr. Axworthy: In terms of VIA Rail, how many members on the other side of the House have preached for years about the need for an efficient use of resources and how we must capitalize our railway to get far better performance? That is what the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) has put into place. The reason is because we have a Minister of Transport who is prepared to make tough decisions, not to back away, not to hide his head in the sand, not to get himself confused in a web of paranoia and fear, and simply allowing himself to be yelling into a rain barrel, but to make tough decision, because that is what we were elected to do.

If there has been any problem with bankruptcy in this country, it has been the bankruptcy of ideas, commitment, or anything positive by the members opposite. The only answer that they have is to engage in character assassination. We have here, as a final tribute to their contribution to the debate and discussion of political issues in Canada, the great issue of the uranium cartel. We have listened now for two solid weeks to all the innuendo, allegation and picking in the garbage can members opposite trying to dredge up something to hit what they think to be a Liberal.

What they refuse to recognize is that the steps that have been followed by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) have been prescribed by law, and the common law of this country. It is to investigate any suspicion, to develop a report, to have that report referred to the Minister of Justice, and to take it to court. Members opposite appear to have lost their respect for the law and due process of the law. If that is the case, then we are in a sorry state of opposition in this country.