

International Peace and Goodwill Day Act

We are a fortunate country and have long enjoyed the benefits of a peaceful and prosperous nation living in a free and democratic society. Our history shows how often Canada has been in the forefront by helping other countries through troubled times. We have consistently demonstrated our compassion and goodwill toward others. This is another opportunity for Canadians to take the lead.

Designating December 26 as International Peace and Goodwill Day will demonstrate to the rest of the world that Canada and Canadians are committed to the goal of world peace. Such a change in name will not detract from any of our traditions. No one is more aware of customs than I am. My strong belief in our traditions are on record as a descendant of the United Empire Loyalists who carved a great society out of this harsh Canadian climate. I believe that such a name change will in fact enhance our historical view of Boxing Day. The traditional concept of this day, being one to honour and celebrate goodwill toward mankind, will be expanded and enriched as we include the whole world in our goal of world peace. Unless we recognize the imminent danger we face, not just as Canadians, but as human beings, we run the risk of losing everything.

Our goal today should not only be to respect our traditions, but to learn from our mistakes and make a positive legacy for future generations so that they will have an opportunity to enjoy and appreciate what we so often take for granted. We must work toward world peace if we are to have a world in which to carry on our traditions. There are many concerns, challenges and battles which face all of us on a daily basis, but without lasting peace this may be our last challenge. It is only fitting that we mark a day of peace directly following the day we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace. This can be a concrete reminder to us all where our hope should be placed.

● (1610)

In conclusion, may I again stress that the creation of International Peace and Goodwill Day will demonstrate to the world Canada's commitment to continue seeking world peace while maintaining the principles of our tradition. I urge all Members of the House to support this legislative proposal. I realize that as a Private Member's Bill it may take a long time for this idea to become reality. Therefore, I would not be against withdrawing this bill as long as the subject is referred to the relevant standing committee of the House.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the motion brought before the House by the Hon. Member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington (Mr. Vankoughnet). Certainly no Member takes exception to the spirit of the matter we are debating today and I believe there is unanimity in the House when we talk about peace and goodwill. Therefore, I believe the proposal to designate an International Peace and Goodwill Day certainly has much merit. I hope the Government and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) will take note of this proposal made by one of their Members.

I have one concern. If we consider this motion in greater detail, perhaps we should determine whether this day should

replace the other tradition of Boxing Day. Rather than replacing one tradition with another, perhaps we should be adding another tradition in this country. For instance, there has been much discussion about allocating a day in the second or third week of February as a day of celebration for our heritage. Perhaps International Peace and Goodwill Day could be considered in the same scope.

Recently I received a letter from one of my constituents who read an article about the Hon. Member's proposal. While she is not against peace, obviously, she feels that Boxing Day is also part of her heritage and part of a tradition. Therefore, I think it would be valuable for a parliamentary committee which is reviewing this motion to study it from the perspective of how we deal with the tradition Canadians have come to know as Boxing Day as opposed to the International Peace and Goodwill Day proposed by the Hon. Member.

A day that is devoted entirely to thinking about peace is significant in itself. The Hon. Member noted very well that the designation of such a day will certainly not solve the ills of the world or reduce the number of nuclear warheads but it might force Canadians to focus some of their thoughts and attention on the whole issue of world peace.

We discuss a wide variety of issues in the House of Commons which may make the news in *The Globe and Mail* or concern our constituents. These issues develop a political momentum which gives us the food for debate in this Chamber. These debates sell newspapers and allow constituents to determine the views of the Government and Members about certain issues of the day. However, as a new Member of Parliament, I have found that this House sometimes loses sight of the more significant issues of the day and what are the international and national forces at play in every corner of the world. Parliament should be addressing those issues and this motion reminds us and all Canadians of the real and important issues.

While the other issues with which we deal in Parliament are important, there is nothing more important in our priorities and nothing more crucial or urgent than the question of peace and goodwill. We were reminded of that in the United States recently when they celebrated for the first time the day devoted to Martin Luther King Jr. That celebration revived a sense of what America is about and brought to mind where America still must go in achieving the dream of Martin Luther King, for which he fought so valiantly. Perhaps we can parallel that sense in this country so that our young people especially can take the time during such a day to value the peace we enjoy in this country and consider what we can do as a nation to ensure that the peace we enjoy is spread across the globe.

In that spirit, I will conclude my remarks so that other Members may contribute to the debate. As far as I am concerned, the Hon. Member's idea has merit and deserves the attention of the Government. Hopefully we can work out a structure in committee whereby the tradition that Canadians have come to enjoy on Boxing Day can be complemented by a special day for peace and goodwill. I congratulate the Hon. Member and hope that the parliamentary committee will