

*Election of Speaker*

[Translation]

It is with great pleasure that I invite the hon. member for the electoral district of Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold, Mr. Gilbert Parent, to take the chair now.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

• (1800)

[English]

(The Presiding Officer having vacated the chair, and the mace having been laid under the table, conducted Mr. Parent from his seat in the House to the chair.)

**The Speaker:** My dear colleagues, hon. members, I beg to return my humble acknowledgements to the House for the great honour you have been pleased to confer upon me by choosing me to be your Speaker.

*And the mace having been laid upon the table:*

**The Speaker:** These words are spoken by all new Speakers in Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth. They bring us back always to our roots and always to our traditions.

I thank you for the confidence that you have shown in me. I do accept this honour with great joy and, I must admit, a bit of trepidation. On your behalf I want to thank our colleagues who chose to let their names stand and who took part in the process established by this House for the election of our Speaker. I want especially to salute my dear friend and colleague of 16 years, a great member of Parliament, Jean-Robert Gauthier.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** I ask the House to join in the expression of a very special note of thanks to the retiring Speaker, the hon. John Fraser, who has served this House with distinction and dignity.

The last passage in Disraeli's diary before he left home to take his seat in the House of Commons reads:

I am now as one leaving a secure haven for an unknown sea. What will the next 12 months produce?

These words are pretty close to my feelings at this moment, but I take great comfort in the comments which have been made in the last few weeks about the necessity to restore dignity and respect in the House.

The hon. Audrey McLaughlin has referred to the fact, and I am quoting, that "the reputation of Parliament has suffered from unacceptable behaviour in the past".

The hon. Jean Charest has said: "We are going to remain open to any new ideas of doing things differently".

Mr. Manning has expressed strong belief in the necessity to stop "the circus-like atmosphere which sometimes has prevailed in the House".

The hon. Herb Gray has stressed that "parliamentary reform is an important part of the government's plan".

[Translation]

The hon. Lucien Bouchard emphasized the word "civility" to describe the quality of the proceedings in the House. All in all, it does seem that despite differences in wording, all participants in the debates of the House put a spirit of co-operation and respect among their highest aspirations.

[English]

In this House of Commons one event affects another and what we anticipate really seldom occurs, but what we least expect generally happens. My colleagues, this is bound to take place in an environment which contains many contradictions.

Out of courtesy we refer to each other, and rightly so, as hon. members. Yet perhaps never in our history have we enjoyed a less favourable opinion on the part of our fellow Canadians.

• (1805)

We sit in this House of Commons, yet it is our wish not to be common but to rise to the heights required of us by circumstance and history. My colleagues, I hope that in all of our conduct and speeches in the House of Commons we may remember that we are not here because of some merit on our part but because free men and free women have faith in us, have faith in the principles which we put forward in election campaigns and, yes, have faith in our parliamentary way of life.

[Translation]

When Madam Speaker Jeanne Sauvé first addressed this House as Speaker, she stated the following and I quote: "It is through you that the country as a whole expresses itself, and it is Parliament which most completely reflects the aspirations of the whole nation."

I humbly accept this heavy responsibility, mindful of my limitations. I will endeavor to be equal to the task which you have bestowed upon me so that this assembly may work for the greater good of all of Canada.

[English]

I thank the clerks. I thank all House of Commons staff on whom we are going to be depending for this 35th Parliament.

I am told that a riding can expect to have a Speaker of the House of Commons represent it every millennium so this is an historic day for my constituents of Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold who have seen fit to return me to this place.

I might say, with my wife in the House and my children watching, it is a very proud day indeed for me and for my family and I do thank you all most respectfully.