

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, January 3, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

## THE LATE WALLACE BICKFORD NESBITT

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, it was with a great deal of sadness that we learned on December 21 of the death of our long-time colleague, Wally Nesbitt, member for Oxford.

Through eight elections spanning 20 years he served as one of the best known and active members of this House, both in government and opposition. He represented a beautiful rural part of southwestern Ontario and, with his skill as a lawyer and politician, never failed to do battle in parliament for his constituents and their concerns on the farms and in the small towns.

However, the interests of the member for Oxford ranged beyond his own area, his province and even his country. For years he was deeply involved in promoting Canada's voice in international affairs and was a receptive listener to the difficulties and hopes of other nations regardless of their size or level of development.

[Translation]

More particularly, he was deeply involved in the United Nations and during the fifties he represented Canada as an important political figure and member of our delegations in New York and Geneva.

It is quite difficult, Mr. Speaker, to make a summary of 20 years of service. I can say that in all aspects of his parliamentary life Wally Nesbitt was active. Throughout the Parliament Buildings he was the friend of all, including members of all parties as well as the members of the Press Gallery and all employees.

[English]

Last fall he courageously returned to this House after a serious illness. He quickly resumed his role to the delight of his colleagues on both sides of the chamber.

It is with particular sadness that we pay tribute to him today and extend our sympathy to his family, his many friends and the constituents of Oxford.

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to associate myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in connection with Wally Nesbitt, the late hon. member for Oxford. The constituents of Oxford have lost a highly valued representative, we have lost a valued colleague, and certainly it was with the deepest of sadness that we learned of his death.

Wally Nesbitt, as the Prime Minister has indicated, sat in this House as the representative for Oxford since 1953. During those years he made a most vigorous and impressive contribution to the work of the House and, I might add, to the work of his party caucus.

In 1957 he became parliamentary assistant to the Prime Minister and vice-chairman of Canada's delegation to the twelfth General Assembly of the United Nations. In 1958 he was appointed parliamentary secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and was chairman of Canada's delegation to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. In 1960 he was elected first vice-president of the United Nations General Assembly and frequently acted as chairman of that body. From 1963 to 1968 he was the external affairs spokesman for this party in the House and co-chairman of the House of Commons Committee on External Affairs. So Wally Nesbitt had an abiding interest in world affairs as well as in the concerns of our country and his constituency.

If I may speak personally for a moment, to me he was a very warm friend and a very capable associate. He undertook various difficult assignments within our own caucus organization. I have referred to his work in external affairs, but since 1968 he has been our spokesman from time to time for transport, for Indian and northern affairs and for science. As a chairman of committees he had a great capacity to organize the effective discharge of work. When he accepted the responsibility for doing something one knew that the responsibility would be discharged very well and very thoroughly.

● (1410)

We were all shocked by his sudden illness. We admired his fight to regain his health. He fought to regain his health so he could take his position again in the House. He showed great courage. We looked forward, Sir, to him regaining full health and full vigour but this was destined not to be. It was with a very heavy sense of personal loss that I and my colleagues learned of his sudden death.

We join with the Prime Minister in extending our sympathy to Wallace Nesbitt's mother and the other members of his family.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I join with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to our late friend and colleague, Wally Nesbitt. I am happy to underline the words of commendation and praise uttered by the Prime Minister. I believe it is very fitting that the Leader of the Opposition has taken this opportunity to place on the record such an excellent resumé of Wally Nesbitt's work, including his contribution to his constituency, to the House of Commons and to the world scene on which he was privileged to play such an important part.

For a number of years our late colleague sat at this end of the Conservative Party benches which meant that we in this party got to know him very well. Although our ideas did not always run along parallel lines, we found him a very warm and genial friend. It was with real sadness that we learned of his illness some months ago and with still