

Senator Douglas Roche Final Speech in Senate April 1, 2004

Hon. Douglas Roche: Honourable senators, 20 years ago, when I was taking my leave from the House of Commons, I made what I called my final speech in Parliament. This time I really mean it.

I grew up in the Sandy Hill area of Ottawa, only a few blocks from where we are sitting, during the 1930s and 1940s. I never dreamed that one day I would be able to serve Canada as a member of Parliament, an ambassador and then a senator, but that is the kind of country we have — one in which a person of modest means can aspire to work in Canada's parliamentary and diplomatic service.

When still a young man, I went west and found, in Alberta, a new home, one that not only took me in but also sent me back to Ottawa to launch my political career. In Edmonton I found the energy, creativeness and sense of purpose that I was looking for. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity, along with my Alberta colleagues, of whom His Honour is chief, to have represented a great province in the Senate.

I must tell honourable senators, frankly, that in 12 years in the House of Commons and nearly six in the Senate, I have never lost the feeling of honour just to be able to walk onto the floor of these two great institutions.

Now, the clock inexorably moving forward, I depart, but not before expressing my deep appreciation to all my colleagues in the Senate, starting with His Honour, and commending him for, among his many admirable qualities, his excellent eyesight in recognizing figures in this corner of the chamber.

The Senate clerk, Paul Bélisle, and the Table officers, officials of the Senate, the interpreters, Hansard reporters and editors, pages, and all the staff, have extended countless courtesies to me.

It is abundantly clear that I would not have survived in the Ottawa political culture without the extraordinary assistance of Pam Miles-Seguin. I hired Pam some 30 years ago when she was fresh out of school, and she has strengthened my professional life ever since. I have lost count of the many administrative and logistical problems she has solved for my family and me.

Honourable senators, if you want someone who can organize your life for you, and who can do half a dozen things all at the same time and keep smiling in the process, run, do not walk, to seek out Pam.

I am also grateful to Bonnie Payne, my assistant in Edmonton, who has been with me for 15 years, and to all my research assistants, including Steve Grunau, Todd Martin and Chris Hynes.

There is no way to adequately thank my wife, Patricia McGoey, and my children, Evita, Douglas Francis, Mary Anne and Patricia. Their love and support have strengthened me immeasurably.

Honourable senators, when I made that final speech in the House of Commons 20 years ago, I talked about disarmament and development as the two indispensable requirements for peace and global security. These themes, along with the guaranteeing of human rights and the protection of the environment, are with us still today.

However, despite the wars of our time, which inflict such terrible suffering on so many, the world is moving forward. The elements of a culture of peace — respect for all life, rejection of violence and a desire for social justice — are coming into much sharper focus.

Of course, much work remains to be done — an agenda that I commend to you. I personally, as long as God gives me the

strength, will never rest until nuclear weapons, the ultimate evil of our time, are abolished.

I close with the optimistic words of Isaiah: "Peace, peace to the far and near, says the Lord; and I will heal them."

Honourable senators, thank you for the opportunity of being with you. I wish you well. Bonne chance. God bless you all — and God bless Canada!

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

(1400)