

The Late Right Hon. L. B. Pearson

[English]

THE LATE RIGHT HON. LESTER BOWLES PEARSON

TRIBUTES TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, within the past week Canadians and millions of persons around the world were grieved by the death of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson. It is my sad duty today to pay tribute to his memory and to a remarkable lifetime of service. Part of that life was devoted to a distinguished career in this House, as the member for Algoma East from 1948 to 1968, contesting in that period eight separate elections, as Secretary of State for External Affairs, as Leader of the Opposition and as Prime Minister. In this place he was the initiator and guide of many measures that have contributed to the strength and purpose of Canada—our flag, some of our most outstanding social legislation, the recognition in various ways of the diversity of Canada and of the historic rights of its peoples.

[Translation]

The great prestige Mr. Pearson had earned for himself was due, in great part, to his activities on the international scene. But it was in his own country that he found his deepest concern as well as his most genuine commitment. To the fulfilment of national unity, he devoted most of his energies. He worked steadfastly for the creation of real ties between federal and provincial governments and to that end he opened, in 1968, the Conference on the Constitution and emphasized the partnership existing between our two great language communities through the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and legislation following its recommendations.

[English]

In the world beyond our borders he worked increasingly for an international community which respected the rights of the smaller countries, of the less developed countries, of the individual. His energy and skill and imagination in the quest for peace brought him many honours, among them the Nobel Peace prize and Her Majesty the Queen's Order of Merit.

• (1630)

Mr. Pearson's effectiveness in the institution of Parliament and in world councils was largely the result of the same human qualities which endeared him to all who were fortunate enough to make his acquaintance, the qualities of humility, of friendliness, of humour. These attributes made him at once a figure inspiring both attention and affection. Those of us who had the privilege to serve in his ministry will forever remain indebted to him for the increased love of Canada and Canadians which he cultivated in us.

The Nobel Prize citation described Mike Pearson—the statesman, the diplomat, the man—as one who had a “strong faith in the final victory of the good forces of life”. There can be no finer tribute to a man whose loss makes Canada and the world a poorer place. To Mr. Pearson's family I offer, on behalf of us all, our sincere condolences.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to associate myself with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in paying tribute to the Right Hon.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Lester B. Pearson, a very distinguished son of Canada. Many tributes have been paid to Mr. Pearson with respect to his contribution to this country and many tributes have been paid to him abroad. He was a man who inspired human warmth and affection in those who knew him, whether they agreed with him politically or found themselves in opposition to him. He was a warmhearted man. I know that hundreds and hundreds of tributes have been paid to him, and they have truly come from the heart.

He had many accomplishments, but I like to think of his principal accomplishments, his principal efforts, as attempts at bringing people together. He understood and respected the differences in people and the different attitudes of various people. I believe Mr. Pearson wanted others in Canada and in the world to understand and respect the differences in other people and, understanding the differences in others, work them out or, failing that, live together and respect other people's differences.

[Translation]

To him, Canada was a country to love and to build. He worked sincerely and at great length for the cause of unity in this country.

[English]

As the Prime Minister said, all who worked with him and knew him liked and revered him. He was a man who spent his life in the service of his country and in the service of world peace. He spent it with zest and good humour. I am proud and pleased to associate myself and the party I have the honour to lead in the tribute paid to that great Canadian statesman, Mike Pearson. May I also, on my behalf and on behalf of my party, add my expressions of sympathy to Mrs. Pearson and the family.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, there is not much that one can add after the eloquent tributes which have just been paid. My colleagues and I would feel remiss in our duty if our appreciation of Mr. Pearson's life and work were not on the record. Mike Pearson was a world statesman and, as such, was mainly responsible for easing the Suez crisis in 1956 and for introducing the peacekeeping force in the Middle East. For those international activities he received, as everyone knows, the Nobel Prize.

I was always struck by the fact that his concern for peace and international understanding never ceased. He had the courage of his convictions. I recall in 1965, in a speech in the United States on the eve of talks with former President Johnson, he made an outspoken appeal for the cessation of air strikes against North Viet Nam, knowing, as was borne out by what eventually happened, that President Johnson would not appreciate his gesture very much.

No sooner had he given up his duties as prime minister of this country than he undertook a heavy international duty involving a study and a report in the realm of international economic aid to developing nations of the world. The report which was produced under his guidance will remain for long an important and inspiring guide to those concerned with this urgent international problem.

At home, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Pearson's two minority governments of 1963 and 1965 produced important social