

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 14, 1975

The House met at 11 a.m.

THE LATE ARTHUR LAING

TRIBUTES TO DECEASED SENATOR AND FORMER MINISTER

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is unusual to interrupt the business of the House at this time, but I feel that all members would wish to join me in remembering our late friend and fellow parliamentarian, Arthur Laing. All of us would wish to express not only our very real sadness and sense of loss at this time, but also our great respect and affection for Art, to his wife and to his family.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself and my party with the remarks of tribute to Art Laing made by the government House leader. I had the good fortune of being in Nova Scotia in the early 1950s when Art Laing came there on occasion as a member of parliament. He certainly served his party well both provincially and federally. Although, as I have said, he was a good servant of his party, he was a man who was very fair and open in dealing with all Canadians whatever their political stripe might happen to be. I liked him very much and I would like to associate myself and my party with the tributes paid by the government House leader, and extend our sympathies to Mrs. Laing and the family.

● (1110)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, when Arthur Laing first came to this House in 1949, those of us who were here immediately found him to be a most likeable person. As the years moved on, we came to like him even more. I think it is significant that we are departing slightly from our practice this morning by referring to him, because all of us want to pay our respects to our late friend and colleague. He did his work well as a private member. He held three portfolios with distinction. Indeed, the last one he held for only a few months, yet I suppose he is still remembered for the good job he did as Minister of Veterans Affairs. My colleagues and I are happy to join the government House leader and the Leader of the Opposition in paying our respects to Arthur Laing's memory and in extending our sympathy to his family.

[Translation]

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, although I did not have the pleasure of knowing the late Arthur Laing, on behalf of both my party and myself I wish to join the leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the representative of the NDP in offering his family our most sincere condolences.

[English]

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the House would permit me a moment or two just to add a few personal words about Arthur Laing. I had a long and close association with him, not least as his parliamentary secretary in this House for 2½ years. Arthur Laing came from a pioneer British Columbia family. The Laing farm used to be on Sea Island next to the Grauer farm where the Vancouver airport is now situated. He and my mother were classmates and graduated together from the University of British Columbia in 1925. We have known the Laing family at least that long.

No one knew the province of British Columbia better than did Arthur Laing. He possessed warm qualities of integrity and sincerity, and no one who ever met him, even casually, failed to be impressed by those qualities. I think it is fair to say that as a politician he was unexcelled, particularly in the small towns and northern reaches of this country. He was a first-rate parliamentarian. He was very much at home in this House of Commons—he loved this place. He defended three portfolios with remarkable success. I believe he is going to be missed, not only by a good many members of this House who knew him but by many, many people in this country. I add my sympathy to that expressed by the House leader and other hon. members who have spoken, for his widow Geraldine, his daughter Linda and the other members of the family.

Mr. Len Marchand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might also be permitted to say just a few words. I would like to join the House leader in his words of tribute to Arthur Laing, and also the expressions of sympathy for Mrs. Geraldine Laing. I served as Mr. Laing's special assistant for almost three years during his term of office as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, from January, 1966, until the election of 1968. I wish to underline what was said by the Minister of Finance: Arthur Laing was a man whose integrity was unquestioned, as was his service and dedication to his country. He initiated a number of new policies during his term of office as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, when I was with him. He was particularly development conscious, not only of development of resources but development of people. He was very much concerned about this. During his term of office he often encouraged the Indian people, for instance, to get up on their hind legs, to start speaking and doing things for themselves. This sometimes got him into a bit of trouble, but his accomplishments during that period will long be remembered by his many friends.