

*The Address—Mr. Boisvert*

hon. members of the other provinces are glad to see and welcome today.

Seconded by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Arthur Laing), I have the honour to move:

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Viscount Alexander of Tunis, Governor General of Canada and Commander in Chief of Canada:

May it please Your Excellency:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the House of Commons of Canada, in parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both houses of parliament.

I now hasten to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your elevation to the speakership of this house. It was a cause of sincere rejoicing for all of us to learn that you were chosen to fulfil such noble and important duties. A better choice would not have been possible and the government deserves our gratitude for having made it. The sterling qualities I know you to possess had destined you for the functions you will discharge. Guardian of the prerogatives of our house, you will, we are sure, guide our debates with dignity and impartiality. I am convinced that all hon. members will strive to ease your task because they trust your uprightness and your spirit of fairness. There are men who exalt the public functions to which they are appointed. You are, like your predecessors, one of those men. If our parliament enjoys so great a prestige it is due to the unquestionable worth of its Speakers. Anything I might add to what I have just said would be a verbal garland which would offend your modesty.

To some people, our constitutional institution may seem antiquated and ridiculous. There are writers who make fun of our parliamentary procedure. Recently I read the following statement made by Sir Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the council, in England:

We must not be mistaken as to the survival of ancient customs and practices. Some say: Such an institution dates back to the "pre-machine" era! It goes back to the feudal ages! It should, at all costs, be adapted to modern needs! I believe they are taking form for substance. Judging by the results, I declare that our parliament is the most efficient instrument in the world, the best adapted to its end. One should see the practical utility of our "anachronisms." Why must all this pomp and panoply accompany Mr. Speaker? Why such extreme deference in word and gesture when addressing him? Why the wig and robes? Why all the bowing before the Chair when entering or leaving the house? Why such courtesy—supposedly out of date—during the debates, when the worst adversary is called an "honourable member," "gentleman of honour," "learned gentleman" or "right honourable gentleman"? Members entering the house for the first time look upon the whole ceremonial as an absurd custom handed down from ancient times.

But they very soon realize that it adds greatly to the authority of the presiding officer, is conducive to the maintenance of good order during debates, and exalts the dignity and "esprit de corps" of the house in the eyes of all, both inside and outside parliament.

May I be permitted to say, with regard to this judicious comment, that our well-ordered procedure is the safest guarantee against any form of political, economic or social dictatorship. We must already keep in mind the possibility of a social dictatorship! I hope to have during this session an opportunity of supplying particulars in the language of the majority. I have the most sincere respect for my English-speaking countrymen and the greatest confidence in their desire to achieve Canadian unity of such a strength that we shall be able, without clashes or efforts, to maintain the traditions and the prosperity of our country.

(Text):

If I have insisted on quoting Sir Herbert Morrison at length it is because I believe, as he does, in the supreme value of the institutions which have been transmitted to us through tradition. According to established custom I must address this house in my mother tongue, which is the old French language. I will not quote the British North America Act—although I could—as the basis of my right to use that language. I would rather invoke the established custom to which I have referred, and which does greater credit to our parliament and the country as a whole.

The French spoken in Quebec is not the fancy French spoken by the Parisian. It is the old French of the seventeenth century, which we jealously safeguard, knowing that from the standpoint of basic French it compares with Parisian speech. The knowledge of French acquired in Quebec equals that which could be acquired in France. What notable service would be rendered if we dispelled this legend of Parisian French, which is not a use of words different from ours but is merely a relatively new way of expressing oneself. Whoever reads Molière and then talks to a French Canadian will soon recognize in the latter's conversation words used by the former in writing his immortal masterpieces.

The text from which I quoted Sir Herbert Morrison was written by him in the language which I am using with pride today. I know this pride will be shared by my constituents in particular, and by all French Canadians in Canada, who will be deeply grateful to the Prime Minister for having chosen me, as a representative of an entirely French-speaking constituency, to move in my own tongue the address in reply to the speech of the