

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 23, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

THE LATE LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON

TRIBUTES TO FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, little more than two weeks ago we performed in this House the sad task of paying tribute to a former president of the United States. Now we do so again, this time in memory of President Lyndon Johnson, a contemporary in public life of many hon. members.

Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency from the office of vice-president, as did Harry Truman. And as President Truman had done before him, President Johnson was successful in seeking re-election in his own right. During his term in office, some of America's most progressive social legislation took form in response to his desire to eliminate disparities of all kinds from American life. Abroad, however, the tragedy of Viet Nam became increasingly intractable, and escaped attempts at resolution.

President Johnson visited Canada on three occasions. During one such trip he opened the impressive United States pavilion at Expo '67.

Mr. Johnson was, in many respects, larger than life; a man who mirrored faithfully the colour and character of a vast region in his country, reminding us in Canada of the variety and size of our vigorous neighbour. President Johnson's role both in the United States and the world is too recent to measure with adequate perspective. No one can doubt, however, the intense passion and dedication to his countrymen which he brought to the presidency.

To President Johnson's family and to the people of the United States, I offer sympathy and condolences.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister reminded us, this is the second time in a few short weeks that it has been our sad duty to pay tribute to a former president of the United States who has passed away. I did not know President Lyndon Johnson, but with my fellow citizens I followed his career with absorbing interest. Even though he was not working within the parliamentary system as we know it in Canada, I think it is fair to say—if it is not presumptuous of me to say this—that he was a great parliamentarian within the Congress of the United States. Probably no American of his generation was such a master of the legislative process in that country, and it seems to have been generally due to his skill in that area as a member of Congress that he was able to achieve such an enviable legislative record, first as leader in the Senate, then as vice-president of the United States, and finally as president of his great country.

He was a man of great courage who suffered a severe heart attack years ago but overcame it to seek and achieve the highest and most responsible office in his land. As president of his country he had, certainly, some agonizing decisions to make in the realm of foreign policy, and it is no secret that some of these caused division in his own country and in the world. It was surely to his great credit, both as a man and as a patriot, that under circumstances that are generally familiar to all of us he put the interest of his country before any desire he may have felt to continue to serve as president by seeking a further term in office.

I join the Prime Minister this afternoon in paying tribute to a man who for five years served as a powerful president of the United States and whose actions were certainly dictated by the good of his country as he saw it.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, after a long and successful career in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, Mr. Johnson was catapulted to the presidency of the United States on the assassination of President Kennedy. On that day the world saw him on a plane being sworn in as president and sympathized with the concern etched on his face as he committed himself to his awesome duties. The five years during which he held office as president were difficult and to some extent unhappy ones for the United States, both internally and externally. His death at a relatively early age may well have been the consequence of his heavy and sometimes frustrating burdens.

On behalf of my colleagues and myself I join in the expression of sympathy and condolences to Mrs. Johnson and the family.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, the death of a man whose far-reaching importance put him in a position to determine the fate of the whole world comes as a shock to us particularly in view of its unexpectedness.

The former president of the United States took over the leadership of the most powerful western country under tragic circumstances that we all remember. The task that was his was only equalled by the enormous responsibilities attached to it. History will assess the work of Mr. Johnson.

We grieve over the death of this prominent statesman. However, we also think about the thousands of human lives sacrificed in Viet Nam. May these days of mourning afflicting our southern neighbours coincide with peace in Viet Nam.