

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 understand it is the privilege of the mover of this resolution to make a few remarks to the house. First it is my pleasure to express to you, Mr. Speaker, my sincere congratulations upon your election to the high office of first commoner, which took place yesterday. I believe my sympathy should also be extended to you, sir, because you have before you a great number of members of parliament, I think something in the nature of one hundred, who are making their first appearance in this chamber. I feel, however, that the new members may expect from you consideration and courtesy, in that despite this high honour you yourself have not long been a member of this House of Commons, though we all realize that you have had much more experience in parliamentary procedure than we have had, by reason of your service in the legislature of your province, and also because of the family school in which you have been brought up, which has given so many distinguished members to the public life of the Dominion of Canada.

I am well aware, sir, that a signal honour has indeed been conferred upon me in the invitation to move the address to His Excellency in reply to the speech from the throne. It is, of course, the custom in this house to select for this high privilege one from among those who are taking their first faltering steps in national politics. In my own case, however, I recognize that another and far from personal reason is responsible for my selection and possibly that of my good friend the seconder of the motion. I believe we have been selected for this high honour particularly because we have been associated with the armed services during the war. It is true that in previous sessions during war time this honour has been conferred upon members of the services, but I understand that hitherto it has been performed by members of the major Canadian service, the army. Therefore I deeply appreciate the tactful courtesy that has been shown to-day in asking that the address be moved and seconded by members who have been associated with the other branches of the services of this country. It will be pleasing to them that in this great hour of final victory this additional accolade has been bestowed upon these two services whose achievements have been sometimes overlooked in recent days, when the course

[Mr. Benidickson.]

of the war focused public attention so completely upon the work, the distinguished work, of the Canadian Army.

Mr. Speaker, if I may be forgiven I should like to interject a purely personal note of satisfaction. I had heard the name and rank of the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Langlois) as one elected to membership in the house; but until yesterday, when we met again, I had not realized that he was a former Halifax messmate who had been most helpful to a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force who, rather nervously, was feeling his way in his first contacts with the Royal Canadian Navy as their first air-liaison officer.

In expressing appreciation for the compliment that has been given to the service to which I was once attached, I decline to believe that there was not intended some measure of recognition of the constituency to the representation of which I have been elected. I wish to thank the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and his colleagues on behalf of all the electors and all the citizens of my riding for this honour.

The constituency of Kenora-Rainy River is a very large one. In fact, it is one of the few which can be said actually to span the country, for in the south the constituency of Kenora-Rainy River skirts the boundary of the United States, and moving northward through the rapidly developing mining district of Red Lake, encompasses the shore line of Hudson bay.

Therefore, I say that in the minds of Canadians it might very well occupy an equally strategic position, for it is the constituency in which it can be truly said that east and west meet and mingle.

Many of us, when we think of the city, have in mind the western city of Winnipeg. But always—and of late, unhappily—when we have referred to the fountain-head of our provincial government we have of course referred to the city of Toronto.

Since the creation of our riding some twenty years ago we have sent to the house, consistently, followers of the present Prime Minister. During that time we have sent two distinguished members who have placed upon a neophyte the very heavy burden of upholding a high reputation. Our first member, the Hon. Peter Heenan, was a privy councillor. He had the great honour, one which the constituency still appreciates, of moving the introduction of a bill which made the old age pensions scheme part of the law of our country. All hon. members will appreciate those observations in the speech from the throne which indicates a very necessary extension—