

The Late George R. Pearkes

I wish to add the condolences of myself and of the citizens of Victoria to those already expressed by the Leaders of the Parties of this House and others, to his wife and family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, Major General, the Hon. George Randolph Pearkes, Victoria Cross, Member of Her Majesty's Privy Council, Companion of the Order of Canada, Companion of the Order of the Bath, and awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross, all titles and honours in the service of his country, died yesterday in Victoria. His honours were many; we are honoured to have known him.

As the Member who represents the same people of Esquimalt-Saanich for whom General Pearkes spoke in this place with such honour, dignity, civility and humanity, I cannot fail to be aware of the responsibility that now is mine. In fact General Pearkes set a model for all of us to follow as Members of Parliament speaking here on behalf of our constituents.

His record in the service of Canada and Canadians is one that is not easy to match. Arriving in this country as a young man in his late teens, settling on a farm in Alberta, which at that time had only recently been created a province of Canada, and spending the first few years homesteading there, gave him a deep appreciation of Canada's richness and its readiness to reward those who were prepared to work with its endless resources.

I suspect it also gave him, unless he brought it along with him, a healthy humility when confronted with God's manifold favours. He was a devout man, respecting his God, living by God's laws, and knowing he lived always in God's sight.

He served several years, much of it in the Yukon, as a constable in the Royal North-West Mounted Police. When war was imminent, he enlisted as a trooper in the Second Canadian Mounted Rifles. He trained in Canada and went overseas.

Late in October, 1917, and as a Major, he displayed the fearless courage that marked his whole life. Although wounded, he led his men with the utmost gallantry and disregard for danger—because he was under ground fire and air attack; he fulfilled his Colonel's orders, reached his objectives and returned with his company, depleted, it is true, but their task was fulfilled. His valour on this occasion at Passchendaele won him the Victoria Cross. Throughout that battle and in all his subsequent commands, as Major, later as Colonel, and eventually as Major-General, he never lost the common touch. Because he had grown up humbly, he never became arrogant. Success never went to his head. It merely gave him an added opportunity to serve his fellow men.

There are many instances of his love for his fellow men, his simple, direct approach to all he met, his kindness, and his concern for people, all of which endeared the man to those who served him or with him, as Commanding Officer, Member of Parliament, Minister of the Crown, or Lieutenant-Governor.

As Her Majesty's representative in British Columbia he earned the respect of all those he met and thousands more he never met.

Of no one in the country can it be said more justly that he won our respect because he respected each of us. A more fitting tribute for a great Canadian, a more worthy example for all of us, in whatever walk of life, would be difficult to find. His citation for the Victoria Cross begins "for most conspicuous bravery". For his record of service to Canadians for more than 70 years, I would suggest that we add "and for most conspicuous service".

To Blytha, his wife, to whom he was married for almost 59 years; to his son, John, and to his grandchildren, I am sure the House will want to express its sincerest condolences and prayers for their comfort in their loss. Their loss is ours too.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest to the House that we rise and observe a minute's silence in memory of the late George Randolph Pearkes.

[Whereupon the House stood in silence for one minute.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there unanimous agreement that Question Period extend until five minutes past three?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

● (1420)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ADMINISTRATION

LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN—STATEMENT
ATTRIBUTED TO MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE—REFERENCE TO
AFRICANS

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister of which I have given him prior notice. It has to do with an article that appeared in yesterday's *Globe and Mail* concerning statements made by his Minister of Agriculture. I quote one paragraph:

A man should always wear a hat. . . . No easier way to catch a cold in winter than to go bareheaded. And in summer, the sun'll roast your brains if you don't wear a hat. That's one reason they have low IQs in Africa. They don't wear hats.

Does the Prime Minister find this acceptable behaviour by one of his Ministers, and what has he done about it or intends to do about it?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I always hate this kind of a question, although I did get notice of it. I received the clipping. I realize why the Hon. Member is only quoting one paragraph, as he said. If he read the next phrase after the one he stopped reading, it would have gone on to say: