

the speech of that wise and experienced political leader whose academic excellence ennobles this chamber, Senator Hicks.

Madam Speaker, I can now only reiterate the most sincere and cordial congratulations I had the opportunity of expressing to you on your accession to the highest office in the Senate. All your colleagues, as myself, were not only happy but delighted that the speakership should have been offered to you and that you should have accepted it. From the time when I first came to the Senate, I noticed that more than anyone else you were a model of devotion and competence in the performance of your duties as senator. I hope that you will remain with us for a long time to come that all senators, present and future, might continue to benefit from that example, to find support in your wisdom and to depend on your cordial friendship.

To our new colleagues I extend our most sincere welcome. Like Senator Flynn I would have liked to see the ranks of his team increased to a greater extent, but quality makes up for quantity.

Several of us got to know Senator Asselin in the other place or during meetings of the Joint Committee on the Constitution. He is a tough and uncompromising fighter. However, when required, he knows how to compromise and he does so loyally.

Senator Laing is an old trooper whose experience will be valuable to us. He first sought election 35 years ago, and succeeded for the first time 24 years ago. His experience led him to the legislative assembly of his province and also to the other place where he made his mark in whatever department he was called upon to head. Moreover, like Senator van Roggen, he has personal knowledge of the great Canadian Northwest and its inhabitants and until our Constitution provides otherwise, I wish to see in them the spokesmen for that very important, although very remote segment of our population.

Senators Greene and Côté are practically political twins having been elected at the same time to the House of Commons, admitted at the same time to the Privy Council and called at the same time to the Senate. While I did not consult their health records, I should not be surprised if they had been admitted to hospital at the same time. Let us therefore assure them that they will receive here only tender loving care, since we do not want to be deprived of the benefit of their judgment, of their eloquence and of the profound humanity they displayed in the other place.

Senator Neiman, whose youth and fine presence are gratifying for us, has proved herself in law and politics, but it is mainly as a mother of a young family that I wish to welcome her in this chamber. Let her not feel intimidated if her entry here takes place with a flight of Privy Councillors.

And if these last words were to be translated or interpreted as "a flight of Privy Councillors," let me assure honourable senators that I use it in its strictly aeronautical sense.

The Speech from the Throne at the opening of a new Parliament is a bit like the opening sermon of an Easter retreat in the old days. When the preacher was a Capuchin, then the seven capital sins were reviewed; however,

[Hon. Mr. Lafond.]

if he was a Dominican, he would speak of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost and the attendant virtues. But, already, it has been suggested that this document was rather Jesuistic and that everyone found in it what he was looking for—

Hon. Mr. Flynn: The Jesuits spoke mainly of death.

Hon. Mr. Lafond:—everyone found in it what he was looking for: the Opposition in each of its parliamentary sects, the provinces, and perhaps, even a number of pontiffs, smaller and greater, of the written and spoken media. The surprise of the latter, however, cannot be but of a short duration because, since they have arrogated the role of the only constant and resolute opposition to any government, they do not feel that they can any longer exist or work out of an almost permanent negativism.

It has been suggested that, in this Speech from the Throne, the government has retreated from its position in the recent election campaign. There may be a little bit of truth in this. The Prime Minister himself bowed to the lesson the electorate taught him. However, the government was not pulling back from naught, but from well-established positions, for a comeback more in accordance with the wishes of the population and with the program having been developed and implemented in the light of the Liberal philosophy.

One should not believe that since the Liberal government has suffered a setback in popularity, the truth monopoly was diverted towards the other parties or the provincial governments.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: A party should not remain in the same place either.

Hon. Mr. Lafond: The Liberal government is still in office, its support among the population, as in the other place, being still greater than that of any other party. Indeed, it intends, to a greater extent, to provide for more consultation with the provinces and more co-ordination among the programs issuing from all levels of government, but this while thoroughly respecting the nature of our federal state, and those who will fight that goal should watch out for themselves.

As I said, the government stepped back in order to better rally. Whichever party was given responsibility for governing, I believe that over this period of 1972-73, the government itself at all levels had to get closer to the citizen. I think that in recent years developed the idea that the state could put people into operation, whereas it is people who put the state into operation.

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[English]

As a third assistant coach in the latest exercise in democracy, following the result the thought grew upon me that it would not hurt any of us to go back to basics in political action. To that end I undertook to read again the memoirs of the Earl of Woolton. Early in his career, many years before he became the Bobby Orr of political organization, Frederick Marquis, as he was then known, was about to join a vast commercial enterprise, and on the morrow of World War I, in 1919, he set out for the United States to acquaint himself with the operation in that country of commercial and industrial management.