

colourful, the most beloved and the most admired politician in Saskatchewan's history—notwithstanding Senator Steuart. He possessed that remarkable capacity to expound his social and political views by a special combination of humour, logic and compassion, and in such an articulate, sensitive and simple manner that even those who were not persuaded by his philosophy had been drawn to his convictions; and wherever Tommy spoke enormous crowds came to hear him.

His perorations on a Bobby Burns dinner, or at a St. Andrew's night, left us marvelling at the heights to which his oratorical ability could rise. Always quick in debate, he could, with a witty remark, a repartee or a humorous quip, destroy and disarm his adversary, leaving the audience in laughter and the questioner helpless but unanswered. To this I, as well as Senator Steuart and many others, can attest.

Tommy Douglas was an idealist and a dreamer. His life and views had been highly influenced by the human misery he saw about him in the 1930s, and were also tempered and galvanized by his deep religious beliefs. Therefore, it was not strange to me that initially he could have been characterized as a rebellious and reformist socialist, striving always courageously to undo the economic and human misery that abounded during the 1930s.

Achieving power in Saskatchewan in 1944, his administration was blessed with the prosperity and the economic boom that followed World War II, permitting him to introduce and establish many of the measures that were dear to his heart, even though prosperous times had eradicated much of the earlier misery against which he campaigned. He realized that such good times were not permanent, but that his social programs would endure even into bad times.

● (1420)

Although many of his early commercial schemes in Saskatchewan, which were aimed at balancing our unstable agroeconomics with industry and manufacturing, failed, nevertheless he steadily legislated and pursued his ideals of social reform to improve the fabric of life in his province, and he did that with persuasive tenacity, sincerity and tireless courage. I am pleased to say that, fortunately, he lived to see the results of his efforts.

His interest was always in people and he brought government in Saskatchewan to his people. Despite the manufacturing failures, he brought rural electrification and telephonic services to the small towns and farms, giving modern living standards to those people, and, as you know, he introduced a compulsory automobile insurance program in Saskatchewan, which was not only successful there, but was adopted elsewhere.

Tommy would wish to be best remembered and recognized for the crowning achievement of his many social reform programs, and that was the introduction of hospital and medical care services in Saskatchewan based on the principle of need, not on the principle of ability to pay. This was his proudest accomplishment and one which he had promised himself during his youthful years, and one which he believed would

[Senator Barootes.]

spread to the rest of Canada. In that regard, his predictions were fulfilled.

In the context of social innovation and planning, he was to Saskatchewan, and maybe to the rest of Canada, the equivalent of what Lord Beveridge was to Great Britain in an earlier period. His legacy in this regard will endure beyond the memory of any of these governments of today, and it is a political fact that it can only be undone by any government at the risk of political suicide.

As one who strongly opposed his particular medicare plan, as Senator Steuart will recall, I must admit that there is less political peril in abolishing Christmas in Canada than there is in abolishing medicare. I think Mr. Douglas' commitment to this ideal establishes him, as others have said, as indeed the "Father of Medicare" in Canada.

In this and in all his social reform innovations, Douglas was a cautious Scot. Buoyant economic times may have assisted him in his endeavours, but he never introduced a new social program that his provincial treasury was not able to cover and to finance. This, I must say, is in rather striking contrast to the fiscal integrity shown by other Canadian governments in the past couple of decades.

Moreover, as a prudent politician, Tommy's social programs were always introduced gradually and sequentially, always allowing for a new program to be introduced with the subsequent election.

As with all politicians, aside from his strong social conscience, Tommy Douglas developed the prudence which comes with power, and the radical soon became the quiet reformer, cautious and careful, but always, always seeking to improve the social environment of the people of Canada.

On the eve of introduction of his beloved medicare program, Douglas left Saskatchewan in November 1961 and came to Ottawa. He gave up his position as head of a CCF government, much to the regret of the people of Saskatchewan.

He linked the populist CCF movement to the Canadian Labour Congress, and formed a new party much along the lines of the British Labour Party, as we know it today.

Once in Ottawa, I gradually sensed in Douglas that, despite his toil and travels across this country in his tireless efforts on behalf of his new party, his voice became somewhat muted and his fire a little less bright. There were, however, times when I noticed that the old brilliance returned, particularly as he widened his spectrum to include those matters of foreign policy related to the suffering of emerging and Third World nations.

We in Saskatchewan sometimes felt that Tommy's old zeal and vigour was declining, and, yet, when he returned to our province, his eyes lit up; his voice seemed strengthened and the adoring crowds still turned out to see, to hear and to touch him. It was, honourable senators, pure political alchemy. Last year, Saskatchewan established an Award of Merit, and it was quite fitting that Tommy Douglas should be the first recipient.

Now Tommy Douglas is gone, but his work and his deeds endure. All Canadians have been touched by his actions; all Canada, and especially my province, is a better place for his