

during the greater part of the past one hundred years with physical needs, but recent years have witnessed a cultural explosion in Canada, bringing with it a flowering of creative talent.

We have many things to celebrate in this centennial year. Not the least of these is the effectiveness of our form of government. It is our good fortune and our proud boast that we in Canada enjoy a long heritage of freedom. Our democratic process is at once a recognition and a safeguard of the dignity of man.

The origins of Parliament lie far in the past, but the process of law-making as we know it today was not realized at a single stroke. Successive generations struggled to gain a commanding voice in their own affairs and to bring an end to the exercise of arbitrary power. Our forefathers had a lively awareness of that struggle and the determination to preserve what had been so dearly won.

We inherited the institution of Parliament from Great Britain but we have made it in all respects Canadian. Laws are passed "by and with the consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada" and take effect when formally assented to by the Governor General in his exercise of the power of the Sovereign. In recent years the post of Governor General has been filled by the appointment of Canadians. Thus, everything done in this land in the name of the Queen is done by Canadians at the behest of Canadians. The giving of Royal Assent to bills is not merely an ancient custom but an integral part of our own legislative process.

With the passage of the Statute of Westminster in nineteen thirty-one, Canada took her full place in the arena of world affairs and became one of the founding members of the Commonwealth. Within the framework of the Commonwealth and in the greater family of nations, the example we offer of a half continent of people living and working together in a spirit of mutual respect and goodwill does not pass unnoticed.

By resolving our problems in this manner and by diligently striving to bridge cultural and regional differences, we have succeeded where not a few societies in the past have failed. This experience has equipped Canadians to play an important and responsible rôle in healing the divisions among people everywhere.

Like all the institutions of men, parliamentary government is not without its imperfections. But it stands unchallenged as the most successful method of democracy. We share this great legacy with others, and this is as it should be, for the ideals and concepts which we cherish are not confined by national boundaries.

It has been said of democracy that it is "based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people." As the instrument of democracy Parliament puts a corresponding faith in its individual members. This is a heavy responsibility which obliges you to put duty before personal ambition. Your compensation is the opportunity you have of service to your country and to the cause of freedom everywhere.

In marking, today, the hundredth anniversary of the opening of the first session of Parliament, we are not only saluting a moment in history. We are recognizing, as well, the enduring significance of a whole way of life. It is in the nature of Parliament that it mirrors the soul of a nation. It is no exaggeration to say that as Parliament goes, so goes a people; as Parliament projects the principles of the nation and the aspirations of its citizens, so are those principles preserved and those aspirations realized.