

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 2, 1951

The house met at three o'clock.

(Translation):

PRIME MINISTER OF FRANCE

VISIT OF MR. RENÉ PLEVEN AND HIS PARTY TO
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, amongst the first to follow upon your instructions of a moment ago, that the doors of the gallery be opened, we see His Excellency Monsieur René Pleven, president of the council of ministers of the French republic, and those who accompany him on a visit which does us honour, Their Excellencies ambassadors Parodi, Alphand and Guérin, the latter of whom is now in Canada, and Miss Sicard.

All our colleagues, I am sure, will wish to extend to them their most heartfelt greetings and to thank them for showing by their presence here the sincerity of the co-operation between European countries and those of North America in our common undertaking to build up a military force of sufficient strength, based on sound national economies, on economies so closely bound as to deter any aggressor.

(Text):

Mr. Rene Pleven, in common with many of us here, Mr. Speaker, boasts of an ancestry whose roots go deep in the soil of Brittany. He has all the qualities and qualifications which we value so highly, among them that of being perfectly bilingual. He is fluent in the two languages which are official in this house. I know from my own privileged experience in relations with them that those who are with him on this occasion are also bilingual. That can only add to the warmth of the welcome we extend to them on this occasion, because it will enable us to feel that, in whichever language the proceedings of our house are conducted in their presence, they will appreciate that our problems and our concerns are the same as theirs, and are the same as those of free men and women all over the world. Our own hopes for world peace are based on the prompt co-operative action of all of us, and the visit with which we are honoured at this time is concrete evidence that that action is being vigorously undertaken.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to join with the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) in extending a most cordial welcome to the representative of a nation which is bound to Canada by so many ties of blood and affection. As the Prime Minister has pointed out already, it is perhaps a symbol of that understanding which means so much to all of us that Mr. Pleven comes from that part of France which gave to this country so many of its early settlers.

In joining in this welcome to Premier Pleven may I say also that there are reasons why thoughts of France are at all times in the hearts of the Canadian people. It is because in hundreds of thousands of Canadian minds there is always the memory that there is some part of France that is forever Canada. To all the friends and relatives of nearly 100,000 young Canadians who gave their lives in the common cause of freedom in two world wars, French soil is sacred soil, and the efforts of France to join with us and with the other free nations in preserving that freedom means not only the preservation of the proud soil of France, and all that it means to the people of France, but also, for us, the preservation of those bits of soil throughout that country which are so dear to many of us in Canada.

Mr. Pleven is a young man whom we welcome here not for the first time. We welcome him once again because at this time when there is the utmost understanding between France, Great Britain and Canada—in so many ways bound more closely together by ties of blood than any other nations—it is of maximum importance that in his high office as premier of France he should have a background of years of work in Canada and in Great Britain which gives to him a personal and working knowledge of the lives of the people of those countries, of their own problems, and also of their great strength and stability. Every one of us, not only here but throughout Canada, wishes him well in his high endeavours in this common cause, and we all trust that out of this time of peril and uncertainty France will carry forward into the years ahead her inspired traditions of freedom, industry and culture.