

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 1, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

NEWFOUNDLAND

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES ON TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF UNION WITH CANADA

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, today Newfoundland completes 25 years as a province of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: It is obvious that all hon. members join me in expressing congratulations and offering best wishes to the people of Newfoundland on this happy and historic occasion.

[Translation]

At midnight on March 31, 1949 that old dream of the Fathers of Confederation finally came true. The oldest settlement in North America became the newest Canadian province and we then understood the meaning of the words "A mari usque ad mare."

Newfoundland has made appreciable progress during its first twenty-five years as a Canadian province and this is a source of satisfaction for all of us. It is also a source of satisfaction to have the irrefutable proof that Newfoundlanders have considerably enriched our national life.

[English]

With their rich traditions, their centuries old distinctive culture, their strong, independent spirit and their many talents, Newfoundlanders have made a very significant contribution in virtually every sphere of Canadian endeavour. I am sure this will continue to be the case for during the past 25 years Newfoundlanders have been loyal and dedicated Canadians. They have a deep commitment to national unity. Yet, no group offers clearer proof that it is possible in Canada for people of varied and differing backgrounds who have common objectives to work for the advancement of national purposes, while at the same time maintaining their individuality and their affection for their special and unique heritage. We all hope that Newfoundlanders will never lose these qualities and, knowing them as we do, there is scant likelihood that they will.

● (1410)

[Translation]

Several among us have enjoyed from time to time the generous hospitality for which Newfoundlanders are so rightly known. A greater number of Canadians will

undoubtedly make that experience during the year of their 25th anniversary. Among them will be the members of the federal cabinet, because we have decided to underline that important event of Canadian history by holding a meeting of the cabinet in St. John's on June 24, 1974.

[English]

This celebration affords yet another opportunity for us to remind ourselves of our great good fortune in this richly diversified land. During the past few years we have observed our national centennial, as well as similar anniversaries in Manitoba, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island.

Now, our youngest province has very much come of age and all members will join with me in saying to the people of Newfoundland that we wish them well in the future, and that it is good to know that we will continue to work together to achieve a stronger, more united Canada of which Newfoundland now forms such an important part.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, this is a great anniversary in the history of our nation, and I join with the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in expressing the appreciation of all Canadians for what it has meant to our nation to have Newfoundland, as he said, complete Canada from sea to sea.

It is worthy of note that 25 years ago in this House the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent spoke of what it would mean to Canada to have Newfoundland join with us. Only two members in the House of Commons today were here when confederation was indeed completed, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and myself.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: At that time Mr. St. Laurent became, as it were, a belated Father of Confederation. It was his leadership that made possible the agreement that was entered into some months before the terms of union. At that time he said:

We are taking a major step in the life of Newfoundland and of all Canada. The people of the nine older provinces and those of Newfoundland are equally aware that one circumstance that has contributed to union is our common loyalty to His Majesty the King. That common loyalty will continue to be one of the most important forces in the life of our united nation.

I mention that as the only living Canadian who is a member of Her Majesty's Imperial Privy Council. Indeed, what the then Prime Minister said was pregnant with thought and powerful in its prophesy, for Newfoundland has been associated with the British Crown since Sir Humphrey Gilbert proclaimed the sovereignty of Elizabeth the First. Through all those centuries the loyalty and devotion of Newfoundlanders to the Crown have become a byword.