

● (1600)

VACANCIES

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that since the General Election held on May 22, 1979, communications have been received from several members notifying the Chief Electoral Officer, in accordance with chapter H-9 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1970, that the following vacancies have occurred in the representation, namely:

The Hon. Don Jamieson, member for the electoral district of Burin-St. George's, by resignation.

The Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, member for the electoral district of Prince Albert, by decease.

Accordingly, new writs of election have been issued.

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THE LATE RIGHT HON. J. G. DIEFENBAKER

TRIBUTES TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate at this point in the proceedings of the first session of the Thirty-first Parliament for the House of Commons of Canada to pause and pay tribute to a man whose presence dominated this chamber for almost four decades, the late Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker. Different Canadians remember different qualities of that extraordinary man. But whatever our other memories over a long and dynamic past I think all of us see him here in this House of Commons in a fighting stance, a House of Commons man who came to symbolize an institution he so often dominated. Here and in the land he was the great populist of Canadian public life who brought vitality to a political process which had all too often become distanced from the people it served. As Canadians, we have always felt ourselves heirs to the spirit of parliamentary democracy as well as to its form, and John Diefenbaker was the symbol of that spirit.

[*Translation*]

But what is even more fundamental is that he has entirely changed our attitude toward our own country. The development of the north which he initiated, and that of the various regions which he encouraged, demonstrate to what extent he was aware of the very extensive opportunities offered by this great country of ours. Canada is essentially a country of builders, and our strength and outlook as pioneers have never been expressed more vigorously or presented more dramatically than through John Diefenbaker's convictions.

[*English*]

He was an indomitable man, a man of passion with strongly held and vigorously defended views, an unequivocal patriot whose commitment and devotion to Canada were beyond question, a statesman whose stature was enhanced by his warmth and by his personal approach toward the people and the land he loved so deeply. He was a singular man who

The Late Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker

entered and enlarged the lives of all of us as no one ever will again. Our people and our Parliament will miss him deeply.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, all of us have expressed in our own way our feelings on the death of the right hon. member for Prince Albert, but it is fitting that one of our first functions in the new Parliament should be to remember him in the context he loved the most. This House was his working home, politically, intellectually and emotionally; it was courtroom, hustings and family parlour all rolled into one.

Almost 40 years is an extraordinarily long time to remain in the nest. Even more extraordinarily is the manner in which the right hon. gentleman continued to contribute to this House. Members came and went, were exulted or diminished, performed or languished, but John Diefenbaker marched right along, never missing a step, never missing an opportunity.

[*Translation*]

First elected in 1940, he arrived here full of enthusiasm, dedication and fighting spirit eager to do what he had always dreamed of doing. The winds of fortune may have changed many times over these past 40 years, but John Diefenbaker remained faithful to his personality and convictions. The eloquence and idealism he had brought from western Canada were still very much in evidence in the last electoral victory which was to bring him back fighting in the House of Commons.

John Diefenbaker will be remembered as a fighter, because that is essentially what he was. He had fought for human rights and for values dear to the hearts of ordinary citizens. He was a man they could understand because he spoke their language. Whenever he stood up in the House to speak on their behalf, other hon. members not only listened well, but took note of what he had to say.

[*English*]

He was a remarkable politician whose strongly held beliefs, ideals and antagonisms were not always shared, though his vigour in holding them was greatly admired. He was more than just a public man. He did not simply touch a person, he got inside him. Indeed, some might say he got under their skin. He was part of this chamber in an almost unnatural sort of way. Even when he did not speak you knew he was here. And when he was not here people would go around wondering what Dief would have said.

I do not know about other members, but I have the uneasy feeling he is still part of this place. Just this morning as I was speaking my thoughts on the role of the opposition when we elected you, Mr. Speaker, I half looked over at the other side expecting to see him shaking his finger at me and thundering, "Never has there been such a conversion since Saul on the road to Damascus."

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!