

*Felicitations to Prime Minister*

I am deeply indebted for what they have so kindly said, and to their followers for the cordial manner in which they have responded to their expressions of good will. In passing, I should like to say to the hon. member for Lethbridge how much I regret the absence from the house through illness of the leader of the Social Credit party. I hope the hon. gentleman will express to his leader my good wishes, and my hope that he may speedily return to this house in health and strength.

To my friend the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot), I also feel indebted for what he, too, has said. I appreciate the friendship I have shared with him, as I do the loyalty and friendship I have had in such full measure from all hon. members on this side of the house.

Mr. Speaker, I had been told that something might be said this afternoon to which I would be expected to reply. Not being too sure, feeling as I have during the past few days, that I might not omit what I most wished to say, I wrote out a word or two this morning which with the permission of the house I should like to read. It expresses what I feel most deeply about this particular moment, in relation to our parliament. I hope hon. members will believe that I speak in an impersonal way in seeking to convey what I feel to be the significance of this occasion.

It is well, I think, we should all have in mind just what has occasioned today's congratulations. To do so, at all events, will make it a little easier for me fittingly to acknowledge what others have found it possible to say. It will make clear, too, that it is to others I owe whatever merit there may be in the long years of office I have been privileged to enjoy. This is what I have written.

It is with a record—a sort of long distance record—in the matter of the time of holding high office in the state that our thoughts and our words are concerned for a moment this afternoon. If records are to be related to countries, then I am indeed happy that it has been my good fortune to be the one to win a record—an unequalled record, I am proud to say—which redounds to the credit of Canada.

What pleases me in equal measure is that a record achieved in our country, and in Canada's parliament, under our system of free, representative, responsible government, should be of great significance to the world today in the struggle we are witnessing between totalitarianism and democracy. The struggle today in many lands, and indeed it has become a

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

world struggle, is again the age-long one between freedom and tyranny, between democracy and totalitarianism. Today's record makes clear that to gain and to retain power in a free country, to help shape the policies of its government, it is not necessary that the head of a political party or of an administration should be either a superman or a dictator.

It has been well said that the symbol of democracy is the secret ballot; that the symbol of totalitarianism is the secret police. The record of which mention is being made today is attributable to the protection afforded the majority, by the secret ballot. Nowhere about this record is there the sinister shadow of a secret police. It signifies the opportunities which democracies afford to a man of average industry, intelligence and integrity, who is prepared to give his time to public service. It speaks volumes for what, in a democracy, is possible for the individual.

Now let me return to the spoken word. I need not say how grateful I am to have been spared in health and strength to enjoy an honour I had never sought, and to the possibility of which, until obliged to do so by the all too rapid passing of time, I had never so much as given a thought.

I am particularly proud to possess this honour at the instance of the people of Canada. I cannot say how grateful I am to my fellow citizens who have given me their confidence over so long a period of time. Nor can I say how much I owe to the loyalty and ability of those of my party who surround me today, and to those who through my years of office—totalling twenty-one years within two months from today—have given me such unflinching and devoted support. I have, too, very much in mind how much I owe to the officials and other members of our public service, and to the many friends without whose help over the years I could not have begun to meet the least of the obligations of my present position.

It is with mixed feelings indeed that I express my gratitude for the many evidences of good will of which I have been the recipient today, from within and without these halls of parliament, from many other parts of our country, and from friends in countries other than our own. I should find much greater satisfaction in the occasion were its emphasis upon years of office to which I might still look forward in this period of transition in the world's history, rather than so exclusively upon years that have flown by so quickly and are gone forever.

To me personally, however, this day is one of thankfulness. I am particularly thankful