

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Speaker: The Honourable PIERRE-FRANÇOIS CASGRAIN

MONDAY, February 1, 1937.

The house met at three o'clock.

THE LATE HON. CHARLES MARCIL

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the house is already aware of the great loss which its membership sustained on Friday last by the death of the hon. member for Bonaventure, Hon. Charles Marcil. The adjournment of this house on Friday evening was an impressive collective tribute on the part of hon. members to the memory of one who had attended forty consecutive sessions of this parliament, and who in point of service was its oldest member. This morning the citizens of the capital and many from other parts of the country joined with hon. members of both houses in paying a further tribute of respect to the memory of him who had become so familiar a figure in the public life of our country. The press, of all shades of political thought, have united in expressions of appreciation of Mr. Marcil's many years of public service. The tributes thus expressed have been supplemented by others from former political opponents as well as personal and political friends and by the clergy of the church of which he was so devout a member.

In these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, my purpose in rising this afternoon is primarily that of gratefully acknowledging what has already been said by way of tribute to the memory of our late fellow member, and of saying, on behalf of those who knew him best, how worthy he was of the eulogies which have been expressed. Mr. Marcil's public life in Canada is generally known to all who are here assembled. I imagine that what our own and future generations will regard as of surpassing interest in his long career is the link that it affords between a past which is rapidly receding and a future that is certain to be full of change.

The Hon. Charles Marcil came of a family nine generations of which had lived in the province of Quebec and of which ten generations extend over three centuries. He was born in Ste. Scholastique on July 1, 1860.

13—1937—14

Like the late Hon. Peter Veniot, his deskmate for a period, to whom tribute was paid only a few days ago, he was one of the very few remaining members of this parliament who were born prior to confederation and who, from memory, could recall incidents associated with that great event. He was one of another group, somewhat larger but also much too rapidly disappearing who sat in this house with the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

With Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Mr. Marcil was privileged to enjoy a close personal as well as political friendship. There was much in the lives of Mr. Marcil and Sir Wilfrid Laurier which made the association between them natural as well as close. Both, as I have said already of Mr. Marcil, came of families that for many generations had lived in the province of Quebec. The early careers of each had its association with journalism, each came to devote his entire time to politics. Both Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. Marcil were endowed by nature with real distinction in appearance which their habit of thought and manner of life, as the years went by, continued greatly to refine. Both were gifted as writers and speakers, and each spoke with equal fluency in the French or the English language. I doubt if anyone who had not heard Mr. Marcil in his prime can imagine with what freedom and grace he spoke alike in French and in English. He was, I think, at his best depicting a scene from the romantic background of our country's history, or foreshadowing the greatness of Canada's future as he conceived it would become. He was a true Canadian, with great faith in Canada and the place Canada would come to hold among the nations of the world. That faith, throughout his life, he ever sought to impress upon his fellow countrymen. He was an ardent Liberal, strong in his convictions, but always moderate and tolerant in the manner in which he spoke. Like Sir Wilfrid, he exhibited at all times those attributes of courtesy and chivalry so characteristic of the race and generation to which each belonged. It was a part of Mr. Marcil's contribution to the parliament of our day that when he