

In 1859, nearly a century ago, the man who later became one of the greatest leaders of the Conservative party, Sir George Etienne Cartier, suggested that Queen Victoria be invited to the opening of our Parliament. The invitation was approved by the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly of Upper and Lower Canada but, for reasons unknown to me, the Queen had to decline it and was represented by the Prince of Wales, who subsequently became our Sovereign under the name of Edward VII.

After almost one hundred years, Providence decreed that one of his worthiest successors should have the great honour of implementing the proposal, and we who admired him are very proud of it.

All those who were fortunate enough to be present at the awe-inspiring ceremonies of last week, all the citizens who had the pleasure of seeing the Queen of Canada on television, all those who heard her speak over the radio to all her subjects of the Kingdom of Canada, are still under the spell of the emotion which they felt and are anxious to honour her.

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister silenced all who might have been tempted to claim that royalty would put an end to our political liberty. He rendered great service to the Crown and surely contributed to enhance the prestige and the stature of our Queen.

Notwithstanding those who claim to be the only saviours of our national unity and who, even now, accuse the Conservative party of endangering it, the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker has proved that he is the true champion and defender of that unity.

What he did upon the opening of this session would be reason enough to justify his presence at the head of our Government.

But this is not all, honourable senators. As was indicated in the Speech from the Throne, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister had barely taken over his duties when he met with the other Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London; a short while later he himself represented our country at the United Nations and on two occasions showed that he was a true statesman.

In the national field, the Speech from the Throne proposed legislation which, when applied, will greatly contribute to the security and happiness of all our fellow citizens and largely remove certain inequities which our predecessors had too long allowed to remain.

The farmers of my province have already benefited by his advent to power and, since August 24, 1957, those of my district have obtained a better price for their chief product.

It is said that the life of a nation, just as the life of an individual, is made up of details, habits, even prejudices, and of unimportant incidents accumulated over a period of years and that, in politics, all of them must be taken into consideration.

The Prime Minister masters anything that can be learned with the help of memory or understood through reasoning. He immediately grasps everything and remembers it all; that is probably the true explanation of everything he has been able to accomplish since coming into power.

Although this is the first time I have had the advantage, not only of participating in, but even of attending, a meeting of the Senate, politics has for a number of years been one of my chief concerns.

What I have read in various newspapers and periodicals concerning the speeches delivered by you who represented, and still represent, a majority in this house, has taught me to appreciate your disinterestedness, your wisdom and even your impartiality.

I therefore trust that you will join with us in supporting without hesitation the Government bills that come before us.

Evidently, we are only a small minority here. As far as I am concerned, I am without experience or any special qualifications. Our strength, however, lies in the fact that we have a leader like the honourable senator from Winnipeg (Hon. Mr. Haig), whose ability and eloquence were already known to me. Such a chief, such a general...

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Méthot: ... is worth a whole regiment, and I am confident that under his leadership we will overcome many difficulties.

(Text):

If you were tempted to minimize the capacity of our leader, may I remind you that he has a deputy leader (Hon. Mr. Aseltine) who is a sharpshooter, a first-rate marksman. I had the privilege of learning, at the beginning of this session, of his ability to shoot ten to fifteen ducks in a row. May I add that these two leaders are, first of all, men of mark.