

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of the riding of Niagara Falls. The riding of Niagara Falls consists of the City of Niagara Falls and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. As many Hon. Members of this Chamber are aware, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was the first capital of Upper Canada. Those of us who originate from that part of the country are proud that this is where many of our freedoms began. The late John Diefenbaker told me of my predecessors that Niagara-on-the-Lake was also the northern terminal for the underground railroad, so to black slaves who were escaping from the south, Niagara-on-the-Lake represented the place where their freedom could begin. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am also very proud to say that I was born in the City of Niagara Falls, the world's most famous address and the number one tourist attraction in this hemisphere.

The Niagara Falls riding, Mr. Speaker, has a broad industrial base and is also the place where most of this country's tender fruit production originates. The late John Diefenbaker recognized the multicultural dimensions of this country. The riding of Niagara Falls is no exception to that dimension. Those who came and settled in the Niagara Peninsula continue to be very proud of their heritage, just as I, too, am proud to say that I am descended from Scottish immigrants who originally settled in Cape Breton Island.

In speaking to this motion, I am reminded of the fact that during most of Mr. Diefenbaker's tenure as Prime Minister and his term as Opposition Leader, Niagara Falls was represented by a distinguished Member of this Chamber, the Hon. Judy LaMarsh. Though she and Mr. Diefenbaker came from different political Parties and differed on many issues, I am sure that their commitments to human rights and equality ensured that they had at least a private admiration for each other.

I am also proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that I succeed two members of my own Party who also represented the constituency of Niagara Falls. I am referring to Mr. Joe Hueglin and Mr. Jake Froese, who served in the Twenty-ninth and Thirty-first Parliaments respectively. Both men have impressed me over the years with their dedication to Canada and I know they continue to be missed by their colleagues who served with them in this House.

My association with and admiration for the late John Diefenbaker goes back to the early 1960s when I was a small boy. My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Nicholson Senior, and my teacher, Mrs. Dorothy Gordon, encouraged me to learn and be aware of the issues that were facing Canada. At that time I was struck by the sincerity of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and his commitment to the farmers, the fishermen and the minorities of Canada. I was moved to the point that in 1963 at the age of 11, I wrote to Mr. Diefenbaker wishing him well and letting him know that I had started a fan club in his name. He replied with a letter of thanks and a picture, which presently hangs in my office. I am sure he might have been able to guess that at that moment a life-long Tory was born. From those initial impressions I had of Canada's thirteenth Prime Minister, I continued to take interest in his actions, his

words, and his career. That man's lifelong commitment to human rights has compelled me to speak out on his behalf this afternoon.

It is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that our present Government is concerned with the past internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. It will always be to Mr. Diefenbaker's credit that he stood up to be counted among those who opposed that internment. Mr. Diefenbaker was an individual who from the earliest times of his career as a prairie lawyer opposed discrimination, among other things, on the basis of race or colour. It is little wonder, therefore, that in 1960, as Prime Minister, he concluded that this country could not support the reapplication to the Commonwealth of the Republic of South Africa. Writers at the time and since have credited his action for preserving the Commonwealth and continuing it as the great institution it is in Canadian life. I was very pleased, therefore, to observe in recent days our new Prime Minister's commitment to the Commonwealth through continued aid to our Caribbean partners. I am sure "the Chief" would have approved.

Mr. Diefenbaker's Government should be noted for the new ground it broke in a number of different areas. The appointment of Mrs. Ellen Fairclough in 1957 as Minister of Immigration was the first time a woman had been appointed to the federal Cabinet. Mr. Diefenbaker also appointed the first woman ambassador in this country's history in the person of Margaret Meagher. The appointment of Mr. James Gladstone made him the first native Canadian to be appointed to the Senate. I am also proud that it was John Diefenbaker who initiated the first appointment of a Canadian of French descent as Governor General. The fact that this Chamber became one which included simultaneous translation of French and English under Mr. Diefenbaker's Government is something from which we can all take pride.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nicholson:** In addition, his Government took great strides forward in the area of voting rights. It is hard for me to believe that at one time in Canada natives residing on reservations were denied the right to vote. I would like to quote from Mr. Diefenbaker's comments in the Throne Speech of January 18, 1960:

The other measure, the provision to give Indians the vote, is one of those steps which will have an effect everywhere in the world—for the reason that wherever I went last year on the occasion of my trip to Commonwealth countries, it was brought to my attention that in Canada the original people within our country, excepting for a qualified class, were denied the right to vote. I say that so far as this long overdue measure is concerned, it will remove everywhere in the world any suggestion that colour or race places any citizen in our country in a lower category than the other citizens of our country.

● (1730)

The measure that finally gave the right to vote to all Canadians without exception was proclaimed into law by amendments to the Indian Act and the Elections Act on Dominion Day, July 1, 1960.