

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 1, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

### RIGHT HON. LOUIS STEPHEN ST. LAURENT

#### TRIBUTES ON NINETY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the House will grant me the indulgence of saying a few words regarding a former Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, who celebrates his ninety-first birthday today.

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

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I have for him an admiration bordering on affection. He sat in this House for a period of 16 years during which he was Minister of Justice, Secretary of State for External Affairs and Prime Minister. Prior to coming into the House he had a record as a most distinguished lawyer and was President of the Canadian Bar Association. Our relations throughout the years intertwined, one with the other. When he occupied the position of President of the Canadian Bar Association I was one of the vice-presidents, as I remember. When he was Minister of Justice I was the opposition critic. When he became Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the latter days of his tenure I was the opposition critic. He then became the Prime Minister and later I followed him in that position.

In all those years the great proprieties of parliament were upheld by him. He is a man who was always a gentleman, a statesman who gave of his best, and one who had a deep appreciation for the meaning of the monarchy within the parliamentary system. Indeed, it is sometimes forgotten that it was he who suggested to Her Majesty that it would be most helpful to the parliamentary system in Canada if she would open parliament. It was his suggestion that brought this about, although it came into being after I became Prime Minister.

We wait too often until men who have devoted themselves to their country pass on before acknowledging their contributions. This does not have the same meaning as conveying to a living person such as Mr. St. Laurent the feelings of all of us in the House. My suggestion, Sir, is that on this anniversary this House do something which has not been done before. I suggest that we have you, Sir, convey to the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, a Privy Councillor of Canada and an Imperial Privy Councillor, of which there are only two now, Mr. St. Laurent and I, the good wishes, the felicitations and the congratulations of all of us, coupled with the hope that he will have many more years with us and that his life will be one of serene realization that in his day and generation he gave of his best.

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

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues of the Liberal party, I would like to associate myself fully with the comments expressed by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). I think he is in a better position than anybody else to evaluate the task and the greatness of the man he has praised. He has lived through that period himself. He has seen Mr. St. Laurent at work and I think that those sitting on this side of the House, who have naturally a special esteem for Mr. St. Laurent, are very happy to hear these words from the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

Since I have been Prime Minister, I too, must recognize that I have become more influenced by the remarkable talents of this man. I have become aware, through documents, programs and legislation which I must look after, of the path he has laid out and the wisdom which characterized his leadership of Canada in the course of the years he was a minister and Prime Minister of this country.

Furthermore, we endorse the suggestion made by the right hon. member. Mr. Speaker, I would like to add that I hope—

[*English*]

—that the right hon member, when I am 91, will be able to stand in this House and utter—

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trudeau:** —perhaps not the many, many deserved compliments that he paid to Mr. St. Laurent, but at least that he will be able to say about me the same words about his admiration bordering on affection.

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

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my leader, the hon. member for York South, has graciously suggested that I say a few words on behalf of our party on this occasion. I am extremely happy to do so. However, I wish to make it clear that I am not 91.

**Some hon. Members:** Explain.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I say that because of the next sentence I wish to utter. It does so happen that Mr. St. Laurent and I were first elected to the House of Commons in the same year.

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

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Thus, I had the privilege of being here throughout the time he was a