

THE SENATE

Wednesday, August 30, 1950

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

SUSPENSION OF RULES

MOTION

Hon. Wishart McL. Robertson moved:

That during the present session of parliament rules 23, 24 and 63 be suspended in so far as they relate to public bills.

He said:

I point out to honourable senators that the passage of this motion will in no way take from the majority of the Senate the right to decide the procedure which should be followed in the consideration of legislation which comes before the house. Such a motion is usually presented near the end of a session, when any variation from the regular procedure as to the passage of public bills requires the unanimous consent of the house.

I hope that, under the circumstances, honourable senators will see fit to concur in the present motion.

The motion was agreed to.

THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE W. L. MACKENZIE KING

TRIBUTES TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Wishart McL. Robertson: Honourable senators, on Saturday evening, July 22, 1950, the career of the Right Honourable William Lyon Mackenzie King came to an end at his summer home in Kingsmere, Quebec.

He was for so long a prominent figure in the public life of Canada that the great majority of Canadians could scarcely recollect the time when he was not a dominating personality in public affairs. Most of the members on this side of our house, including the most senior ones, were appointed by governments of which he was the leader, and many of them enjoyed a most intimate association with him during his long political life. It would be difficult indeed to assess accurately the influence he exerted, over the years, on the political thought and action of the Canadian people.

Although he enjoyed political support for an unparalleled period, it was inevitable that at times he, and the policies which he espoused, should be fiercely assailed. It is generally recognized that Canada is a difficult country to govern under the most favourable

circumstances; but when, in addition to the problems of peace, there arise the tremendous responsibilities of war, the likelihood of violent differences of opinion is multiplied many fold.

If there was one underlying principle which ran like a silver thread throughout the policies which governed Mr. King's long political career, it was his passionate devotion to the cause of national unity. He seemed instinctively to think that in this country, with its diverse and varied racial origins, there existed circumstances fraught with grave danger, but offering at the same time tremendous possibilities. He seemed to realize that if, under the strain of great events and deep emotions, long-forgotten animosities were revived, they might kindle a flame which would soon run like a forest fire, threatening our very national existence. He seemed to feel on the other hand, that if during the most critical moments calm councils could prevail and a deep sense of national unity always be kept in view, there would emerge in due course in this new world a nation not only great in itself, but one destined to provide an example for all the world to witness and, he hoped, to be emulated.

At times his caution provoked great resentment, his facility for compromise was ridiculed, and his failure to take under some circumstances more decisive action was severely criticized. How history will assess his influence time alone will show. But the fact remains that during the period in which he directed the affairs of Canada there was achieved a degree of unity and harmony among the various diverse elements within her boundaries, which left little to be desired. His careful approach to the events leading up to the Second World War resulted in securing parliament's unanimous approval of the policies he proposed to it. Throughout the entire period of hostilities and the trying circumstances of the post-war years, the unity and co-operation of all sections of Canada provided an inspiring spectacle. From a position of comparative obscurity among the nations of the world, Canada had assumed a position of great importance and influence in the councils of the nations—an influence far exceeding the numbers of her people.

The halls of parliament in which he was such a familiar figure shall know him no more, but his influence on the political thought and action of the country he served so well will be felt far into the future.

Hon. John T. Haig: Honourable senators, I think it is most fitting that this house should give a little time to remembering the passing of one of our great Canadians. I believe