

a reputation as one of western Canada's most successful lawyers.

Twice, in 1925, and 1926, the former prime minister ran unsuccessfully as a federal candidate in Prince Albert riding. In 1929 and 1938 he lost by narrow margins attempts at election to the Saskatchewan legislature. From 1937 to 1940 he was provincial Conservative leader when his party had no members in the legislature.

Federal politics

Mr. Diefenbaker won the federal riding of Lake Centre in Saskatchewan in 1940 and in 1953 switched over to become the member of Parliament for Prince Albert.

His first speech in Parliament was an appeal for establishment of a Canadian citizenship — at that time Canadians were legally only British subjects — and he said in a later speech: "If Parliament wants to do one thing that will bring together people in this country of all origins, let it enact legislation to give Canadians the opportunity and privilege of calling themselves Canadian." Prime Minister Mackenzie King agreed and in 1946 the Canadian Citizenship Act was passed.

In 1958, under his leadership 208 Progressive Conservatives were elected, at that time the greatest number of members of Parliament of any government since Confederation. Perhaps the highlight of Mr. Diefenbaker's career as prime minister was the passage of the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960.

Although he considered leaving politics after his defeat in the Progressive

Conservative party leadership convention in 1967 these thoughts were shortlived and he campaigned and won again in the 1968 general election. Back in Parliament, he became the self-appointed protector of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, old military regiments, the royal coat of arms on mail boxes and vehicles and any other historic symbols he felt were in danger. In the 1972 election, at the age of 76, he ran again in Prince Albert riding and led his nearest opponent by more than 10,000 votes.

"They say I'm old," he told his constituents in a campaign speech for the last federal election in May, "I can't deny that I am, but I'll take those birds on for a three-mile race anytime." Again Mr. Diefenbaker was elected to Parliament.

Mr. Diefenbaker told his constituents that this would be his last election. He said he wanted to serve another four-year term, which would have given him 43 years in the House of Commons. He continued to rise at 5 a.m. to begin his working day which included dictation for a fourth volume of his autobiography. Mr. Diefenbaker dictated from memory. His splendid use of the English language was considered legendary and his dictation rarely needed correction.

Travel plans included China

His assistant, Keith Martin, said the former prime minister had been looking forward to leaving for the Yukon, August 17, to attend the opening of the Dempster Highway, the first all-weather road to cross the Arctic Circle. The highway



had been developed under his "roads to resources" plan in 1959.

In an interview in May, Mr. Diefenbaker said he was also planning to travel to the North Pole where he wanted "to plant the municipal flag of the city of Prince Albert and the flag of the Province of Saskatchewan". Mr. Diefenbaker had also accepted an invitation by the Chinese Government to visit China in September.

The former prime minister's honours were numerous: his list of honorary degrees, awards and achievements filled two full pages in the parliamentary guide. He was appointed Companion of Honour by the Queen in January 1976, one of the select group of 65 Commonwealth citizens. Plaques in his honour were placed in the House of Commons lobby, in schools and in public buildings. A lake formed by the Saskatchewan River Dam at Cutbank, Saskatchewan was named after him. The University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, which was the recipient of most of his historical papers, devoted a memorial centre to him.

Tributes

Queen Elizabeth paid tribute to Mr. Diefenbaker. From her summer home in Balmoral, Scotland, the Queen sent a message to the Governor General in which she praised the former prime minister for his unfailing loyalty to Canada and the monarchy. The message said:

"I was greatly saddened to hear today of the death of John Diefenbaker.

"Canada has lost a man of great stature. As a statesman, politician and

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Photos by Ray Pilon, The Citizen