

former speaker, I trust that we newly-appointed representatives will bring as much credit to women, and be as representative of them, as the two honourable senators I mentioned always have in the past.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: Honourable senators, I feel that far too little is known by the people of Canada of the work done by members of this house and of its contribution to Canada's stability. That may be one of the things that women can make better known to our Canadian people, because I think our people should know that.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: Despite my appreciation of the honour of being admitted to membership in this distinguished body, I approach the task before me this afternoon with the greatest diffidence, and assure you that since I was invited to assume this responsibility I have felt that I resembled in feelings, though certainly not in feature, the beautiful Bride of Burleigh when "a trouble weighed upon her and oppressed her night and morn with the burden of an honour into which she was not born."

Although when I was born such an honour could not have been bestowed on a woman in Canada, we Canadian women are very proud that we can now be called to this service. And we are proud to call attention to the plaque at the entrance to this chamber which commemorates the names of Judge Emily Murphy, the Honourable Irene Parlbay, Mrs. Nellie McClung, Mrs. Louise McKinney and Mrs. Henrietta Muir Edwards, the five courageous women who played such a valiant part in bringing before the government the need of a decision by the courts on whether or not women should be considered persons under the British North America Act, and, therefore, eligible to be called to this house. It was due to the persistence of these women that the question was finally referred by the government to His Majesty's Privy Council, which ruled in favour of the recognition of women as persons. I am very glad to have an opportunity to acknowledge publicly the debt owed by our sex for the pioneer work done on our behalf by these women. A memorial, fitting and even more enduring, will be the contributions being made now and which I believe will be made in the future by women members of this house.

But I admit that we women have been slow to follow the lead of those who pointed the way for us. We should have pursued their idea of going into politics and into government many years ago. However, within recent years there has been a very decided up-

swing in women's interest in government, not only on the higher levels, but on all levels, and there seems to have been a tendency on the part of men to welcome women and to be glad to have their assistance.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: All over the world countries are realizing that they have "woman-power" as well as man-power, and that amongst their women is a tremendous resource of public-spirited individuals, many of them well-trained and able and willing to contribute much to government on all levels. Countries that fail to make use of this woman-power are wasting much of their potential strength. But Canada is not amongst those countries. We know that Canada is one of the far-seeing countries that are making use of the capabilities of their women. That is shown by the recent appointments of women to this house and by the election of more women to the other place than at any time in the past.

The crowning event of 1953 was, of course, the coronation of our beloved Queen; and we believe that, sparked by her devotion to public duty, women will achieve more during the reign of the Second Elizabeth than ever before.

That our government is concerned with the problems of the working woman is shown by the recent establishment in the Department of Labour, under the leadership of our present Minister of Labour, of a Women's bureau, to be directed by a woman who will rank with the heads of other divisions in the department. We consider that this is a wonderful step forward, as it is expected that the bureau will give leadership in providing for equality of opportunity between men and women and will iron out many of the other problems facing women in industry and in other fields of labour.

Alerted, as we women probably will be, by the thousands of members of the powerful and interested women's organizations of Canada, we shall be bringing to your attention opportunities where women can serve and where they can receive further recognition.

Honourable senators, all of us in this house will be interested to learn of the plans, mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, for the rehabilitation of disabled persons, and of the proposed program of federal-provincial assistance for the totally disabled. These further steps to improve the social well-being of many Canadians will be welcomed. In my former position, which was connected with the administration of welfare, I had very many requests from disabled people for help and there was no one in our province to