

Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker

Parliament Hill. Sir John A. Macdonald, Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Sir Robert Borden and Mackenzie King all have statues near the Parliament Buildings. However, Louis St. Laurent, in keeping with his reputation as a great barrister and a great Minister of Justice, keeps watch outside the Supreme Court Building.

The rather compelling statue of Sir John A. Macdonald stands outside the Senate. It is unique in that he is depicted as holding his spectacles. I am told that the Department of Public Works is called upon from time to time to replace those spectacles, the disappearance of which is usually ascribed to over-enthusiasm by young scholars.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier looks down on Confederation Square. With the assistance of a hidden heating pipe tunnel, it is at his feet that Ottawa sees the first crocuses of spring.

The rather impressionistic statue of Mackenzie King is suitably placed near the Cabinet Room, in the Privy Council Chamber of the East Block, over which he presided and ruled as Prime Minister for many, many years.

Other statues on the Hill include George Brown, who was the first Liberal Leader. He would probably be distressed if he could read the present editorial line of the newspaper he founded. He is joined by Thomas D'Arcy McGee, who, like George Brown, was a Father of Confederation. Both of those gentlemen were tragically murdered because of the controversy over the roles they played in the public life of this country.

A number of years ago, a statue of the Conservative Prime Minister R. B. Bennett was commissioned, but it has never seen the light of day. I am told that this is because John Diefenbaker was once given the opportunity to view the work and his reaction was said to have been most unparliamentary. Perhaps one result of the Hon. Member's motion is that we will have a chance to look at the statue of Mr. Bennett and to apply our own judgment and see whether it is consistent with that of Mr. Diefenbaker.

There are a number of Prime Ministers who do not have statues on or near Parliament Hill; Mr. Diefenbaker is not the only one. Sir John Abbott and Sir Mackenzie Bowell were the only two Prime Ministers who served in that capacity as members of the Senate. Strangely enough, in view of the present controversy, both of those gentlemen were Conservatives.

There was also Sir John Thompson from Nova Scotia, who, before he entered Parliament, was the very distinguished Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. His sudden death in 1894 occurred dramatically at Windsor Castle, just after he had been knighted by the Queen.

As I previously said, none of these Prime Ministers are represented by statues on Parliament Hill. Also, there is not a statue of Mr. Diefenbaker's great hero, Arthur Meighen, nor of Mr. Diefenbaker's nemesis, Lester B. Pearson.

John Diefenbaker was unique as Prime Minister in that he remained in Parliament long after he ceased to lead his Party. He was never content merely to play the role of elder states-

man. To the end, he was a very active protagonist. Indeed, he was always a great subject for political cartoonists. The last great cartoon when he was living concerned his impatience at the small role which was assigned to him in the 1979 general election.

I do not think he would be upset to hear it said that his career was essentially that of a parliamentarian, and only incidentally, but no less importantly, was it that of Prime Minister. Mr. Diefenbaker survived to live his own legend. Everyone who knew him well and listened to his yarns could almost predict which one would be next. Sometimes one knew that his stories were not always precisely accurate. But no one could ever dispute that they grew better in his telling. For example, when Prime Minister Trudeau asked Mr. Diefenbaker to share his private cabin on a plane to the Queen's Jubilee in 1977, the older man accepted readily, and after the trip when he was queried about how he could travel with a Liberal, he shot back, "Politics make strange bedfellows".

● (1720)

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Diefenbaker was a very distinguished Canadian. He deserves a statue on Parliament Hill. I would also call upon the Government to consider the advisability of erecting statues of all our Prime Ministers. Also, if we are to erect statues of Prime Ministers other than in the order in which they served, I think we should consider a statue of Mr. Diefenbaker's contemporary, Mr. Lester B. Pearson.

We do not do enough to perpetuate the memory of our great men and women, especially those who have served in public life. Statues are a tribute to those they depict. They also serve as a reminder to generations of Canadians of their past leaders and their contributions to the building of our country.

I support this motion, Mr. Speaker. I also hope that it will serve as a surrogate, as a reminder to the Government of the value of recognizing with statues on or near Parliament Hill the lives and contributions of all our Prime Ministers.

In supporting this motion, I am certainly pleased to join in its essential appeal, that of a request to recognize a great Prime Minister and a great Canadian, someone whom I had the privilege of coming to know in my earlier years in this House. This is a worthy motion. It deserves support not only for what it says about the need to recognize John Diefenbaker but the way in which it helps us to remember the importance of recognizing all our Prime Ministers, and in fact all the great men and women who have done so much to build our country for ourselves and for future generations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak on this motion. This is the first opportunity I have had to address this House at length and I want to say that it is a great honour and a thrill for me to be in this House, as well as to speak on a subject which has always been of interest to me.