

Tributes to Mr. Trudeau

● (1430)

When my day comes to sit back and reflect upon all those who have been Prime Minister, I shall be including his name along with St. Laurent and Pearson as persons who have done a tremendous job for the country. I am most grateful for what they have done for us through the years, and I am happy to pay tribute to the present Prime Minister today.

I have talked about our country having had 16 Prime Ministers over the years. Several had very short terms. Some made history, but not the typical ones. The atypical ones in this century about whom we all know are the two I have named already and the one we are naming now. If Parliament concentrates on trying to solve some of the problems facing us, we may do something about them. We will attempt to solve our problems, and this Prime Minister has prompted us to do so.

I made a statement about a week or so ago guessing when the election would take place. I even joined in the guess that maybe he would keep us around a bit longer. Of course we know what happened in November, 1979. We accepted that resignation, but he came back. What will happen this time, we do not know, but the general opinion is that he is making a contribution of which we are appreciative. Some of us have known him for a long time. I hope I do not spoil his story if I say that we had the experience of knowing him when he had some connections with members of our Party. I remember him being at some of our meetings.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: I even recall an occasion in Montreal when I presented a book that I had written about our Party. The present Prime Minister was there. He read it in both English and in French. He somewhat criticized the speech I made at the time. His main criticism was that it was not strong enough; that we were socialists and we should be stronger. I was delighted that he had that conviction and that he had an interest in some of us, such as Tommy Douglas who liked him so well, and others of the New Democratic Party. Because of that I dared to hope that the future years for that man would be tremendous ones for us. In the meantime along came Lester Pearson who brought some of the people close to us into here, into this Chamber, as Liberals. However, it is important to place an emphasis upon social problems, and he has done that. He has also done it as well on questions of world problems among other nations. He has worked very hard on that.

I have one main reason for being disappointed that he is leaving. It is because we should have a person who will continually work toward peace. As I say, I have known some of the Prime Ministers over many years. I have given my opinion of two of them who were very important in the past. I will put the present Prime Minister very high on the list I expect to draw later.

On behalf of my Leader, my colleagues, and my friends across the country, we are glad to join in this response. I

appreciate what he has done for us. We hope things will be better for him. We think our country will gain from the kind of government and concern for our problems which were delivered to us by the present Prime Minister. We thank him and we wish him the very best.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, for nearly five years I have had the honour and the privilege of sitting in the House with the Right Hon. Prime Minister. I have listened to him daily during Question Period and at our Liberal Caucus meetings. I have always been impressed by his great intellect, his grasp of a host of subjects, his way of conciliating divergent views, of putting things in perspective and simplifying the complex. My only regret, Mr. Speaker, is that all Canadians did not have the same opportunity to see him at work.

[*English*]

Most Canadians credit him for his contributions to Canadian unity and to the development of our country with the patriation of our Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He is well regarded for his views on social justice and international aid. It is my firm belief that many areas for which he is criticized will be recognized as problems that cannot be attributed to any one person.

[*Translation*]

In recent months he approached the disarmament issue by trying to promote a dialogue between East and West. Many people tried to accuse him of ulterior political motives. Personally, I prefer to quote the late Governor General Vanier, whose words define the Prime Minister's actions better than any other comment could do. The Prime Minister recalled these words when he spoke in the Debate on the Constitution on March 23, 1981, and I would like to quote what Georges Vanier said in 1967, three days before his death:

The best time is always the present time, because it alone offers the opportunity for action, because it is ours, because on God's scale it is apocalyptic, a time when the lines between good and evil are clearly drawn, and each one of us must choose his side, a time when there is no longer room for either the coward or the uncommitted.

Mr. Speaker, this is counsel all members of this House would be well advised to follow.

[*English*]

I would like to say on behalf of a new generation of Liberal Members of Parliament that we intend to carry on his work and the great traditions of the Liberal Party. We will be counting on his advice, support, and active involvement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bill Yurko (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, speaking with independent authority, I would like to state that, after almost 16 years of riding tall in the saddle, our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has decided to hang up his spurs.

Mr. Crosbie: We think.