

with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) over his 16 years as Leader of our Party and as Prime Minister of Canada.

The Prime Minister was good enough to call me before he made his decision public last Wednesday. I was in my constituency office in Port Hawkesbury where there were many people in to see me. I interrupted my work to take the call from the Prime Minister. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that even though I continued to see the rest of my constituents for several hours, my mind was constantly on the implications of the decision that had been conveyed to me by the Prime Minister. I could only reflect at that time what a formidable political leader he is, and what a brilliant Prime Minister he is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: The Hon. Member from Hamilton asked how the Prime Minister will be remembered. He will be remembered for many things, and it is not for me to detail all those controversial, difficult, and profound issues with which he has successfully grappled during his period as Prime Minister. But I know he will be remembered as a political leader who dominated the public life of Canada all during his public career. He will be remembered as a leader who dominated the House of Commons and during that period had no peer in the ability to carry an argument. That is an admirable quality for those of us who appreciate the value of Parliament.

The Prime Minister worked in caucus. Over all those years he held the support and affection of members of that caucus. As well he held the support and affection of his colleagues in the Cabinet.

I believe the Prime Minister did make a good decision for himself and for the Liberal Party which he has served so effectively, but I cannot help but have a deep feeling of sadness at the decision, and I cannot help but have a very deep pride in having been associated with him all during those 16 years and having lived through the ups and downs of political life.

The Prime Minister's career, I think, can be a model for anyone, a career of dedication, personal tranquility and integrity. I think Canadians have every reason to be proud of him, as I am and certainly as every Liberal member is on this side of the House.

I spoke on November 21, 1979, also. I want to read a sentence I uttered on that occasion.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: I said:

It has been my view since the last election that the Right Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mr. Trudeau) could continue to lead our party and could succeed in returning this party to office in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: Not bad, Mr. Speaker, for in a sense predicting what happened subsequent to November 21, 1979.

Tributes to Mr. Trudeau

I did speak in 1979, and I am speaking today. I did not keep the notes I used in 1979. The notes I use today I will keep against possible future use in the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, like others who have spoken, I had the privilege on November 21, 1979, of saying a word in favour of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) because of his intention at that time to resign. He gave us that indication on November 21, 1979, but on February 18 of the next year, there he was again, re-elected Prime Minister.

In that process, as one who has been here for quite a while and who has known quite a number of Prime Ministers, I think it is a credit for the Prime Minister to have taken enough years so that, even if he leaves this job as Prime Minister in June of this year, he will become a gentleman who will have served 15 years and five months as Prime Minister which, of course, is longer than Wilfrid Laurier served. He was Prime Minister for 15 years and three months. That means, therefore, of the 16 persons who have been Prime Minister of Canada there was only one in our time who served for a longer time, Mackenzie King. But the one next to him will be the present Prime Minister. We congratulate him very, very much on that achievement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: I must say as one who has been here, I have known personally six of those who served as Prime Minister. We have had 16 Prime Ministers in the history of our country. Indeed, I met two out of two of the longest serving Prime Ministers. Of the six who were here I knew Mackenzie King, Louis St. Laurent, John Diefenbaker, Lester Pearson, Pierre Trudeau, and Joe Clark.

I suppose it is a natural thing for one who has been here to form an opinion of them. I was beginning to do that at the time of Mackenzie King, St. Laurent, and Pearson. But after that I certainly formed a very definite and strong opinion that the best of the Prime Ministers I have seen in those 40 years of mine were Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson.

Now, what am I going to say about the other one, the present Prime Minister? Well, we will just wait until he leaves and we start to assess him. But my opinion is that the present Prime Minister's 15 years make a total longer than the other two, who had 14 years between them, and I think he has had to face more severe and more difficult problems than previous Prime Ministers I have known. I think that applies to Governments and Parties as well. The problems facing Canada today are greater than they were before. During the time of the present Prime Minister they were greater for him than they were in the past. However, he has done a good job. He has worked hard. He has done his best to make this an effective country.