

Leader of the Opposition

co-operation in other lines of endeavour. The sentiment so gracefully expressed by the Prime Minister in relation to the hon. gentleman and the great honour which has been conferred upon him will, I am sure, be shared by every hon. member of the house.

I was delighted to hear the Prime Minister make reference to the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie). While I have been a member of this House for only a few years, I noticed a great difference in the temper of the House last session primarily due to the very able leadership of the hon. member for South Wellington. It is not for me of course to advise the hon. member for West Calgary; but I would merely remind him of the splendid attitude which the temporary leader assumed last year and may we hope that he will follow in the footsteps of that hon. member. It will be an honour and glory to this country if the hon. member does so.

Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I desire both on my own account and on behalf of those who are associated with me, who sit to your left, to express our very sincere thanks to the Prime Minister for the kindly words of congratulation that he has been pleased to utter with respect to my election, or possibly I should say selection as leader of the opposition and election as leader of the Conservative party. **By my election to an office that has statutory recognition as part of the machinery of parliament and of government I recognize that I have assumed grave responsibilities and undertaken great duties.** The very observations which the Prime Minister has addressed to the House but bring to my mind my own defects for the discharge of these duties. But I shall do my very best conscious that the spirit which actuated the right hon. gentleman in making the observations that he did is a spirit that I have found in every part of Canada since October last, a spirit of great kindness and consideration for a fellow citizen who, the people believe, has undertaken grave and serious responsibilities with a desire to be of some service to the country in which he lives.

I think I am right in saying that no man has been more kindly received by his political opponents and no man has received greater kindness from the press of this country than has the leader of the opposition since October last. That in itself indicates the fundamental kindness of human nature and the really serious desire there is on the part of the

[Mr. Gardinier.]

people to express their sympathetic consideration for those who undertake great public responsibilities.

I can only further say that under our system of government the duty of an opposition is a very important one. Fearless and courageous criticism must always be tempered with constructive suggestion and a desire that, whatever may happen, the opposition itself may serve some useful purpose in the direction of the affairs of the country and to that end I will devote my best energies. I am sure that represents the attitude of mind of all those who are associated with me in the discharge of public duties and obligations.

I should like again to thank the Prime Minister for his suggestion that we may be able to maintain the high traditions of parliament. Courtesy in debate, reverence and respect for constituted authority as represented by you, Sir, and regard for the rulings of the chair, conferences, mutual understandings, regard for the point of view of one another—all these things will tend to expedite the transaction of public business and are not inconsistent or incompatible with the maintenance of the high policies and, shall I say, the high policy of the great party which I have the honour to represent and the enunciation of them from the floor of this chamber. Keeping that in mind I shall endeavour to discharge the duties of the difficult task which I have undertaken with a desire to be of some service to Canada and to make it easier, I trust, to conduct public business than if we took a merely partisan view for the purpose of interposing objections and opposition for its own sake. That, Sir, we will not do. I can only make that promise to the house, to you, Sir, and to my hon. friends opposite. I trust the relations which have thus been so auspiciously opened between the government and His Majesty's loyal opposition may be long continued, and if the fortunes of war change the position of the parties I know the right hon. gentleman who now leads the government will approach the discharge of his duties in the future in the same high spirit which he displayed in 1919 when he found himself in the position which I now occupy.

Hon. HUGH GUTHRIE (South Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I regret that at the moment the Prime Minister rose I was occupying not my own seat but the seat of another member in this chamber. I am glad indeed that I was in the chamber at the time and I rise now merely to express to the Prime Minister my very sincere thanks for the kind and all too complimentary remarks he made in regard to my conduct during the past year.