

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 20, 1948

The house met at three o'clock.

RIGHT HON. W. L. MACKENZIE KING

FELICITATIONS ON HOLDING OF OFFICE OF PRIME
MINISTER LONGER THAN ANY OTHER PRIME
MINISTER OF A BRITISH COUNTRY

Right Hon. J. L. ILSLEY (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, there are a few words which I should like to say to the house. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has today reached another milestone in his remarkable career, and I am sure that the house would wish to give some recognition to the occasion.

It is no small achievement to have held the high office of prime minister, not only longer than any former prime minister of Canada, but also longer than anyone has held the office of prime minister in any country of the British empire.

What the Prime Minister has attained is a world record as the elected leader of a free nation. That such an achievement has been possible is of course a proof of his rare and impressive personal qualities. But it is also an indication of the stability of our people and of the completeness with which they have adapted British institutions to Canadian conditions.

My remarks, I need hardly say, are in no sense intended as a party manifestation. I would hope that my sentiments would be shared by all members of the house. But speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister's political supporters in the house, and I think I can also speak for his political supporters throughout the country, I count it a privilege to extend to him on this occasion our sincere congratulations.

Mr. J. R. MacNICOL (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, there are indeed occasions when all partisanship can be laid to one side, and I think the present is an occasion on which we can all join in recognition of the very high distinction that has come to the right hon. the Prime Minister in the fact that he has held office as prime minister longer than any other prime minister in any of the British dominions or in the dear old motherland itself.

I understand that today the right hon. gentleman exceeds the long tenure of office of Sir Robert Walpole, whose portrait hangs among those of other famous men in the corridor leading to the restaurant on the sixth floor.

In my childhood we used to read a good deal about Sir Robert Walpole, and we were struck by the fact that he had held office for so long a time.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I feel very humble. My leader (Mr. Bracken) just a moment ago sent word asking me to speak after the right hon. the Minister of Justice. The Prime Minister and I have something in common, not shared by any others in this house. Our mothers were warm friends as girls in Toronto, and many a time I heard my own mother speak of the right hon. gentleman. It is therefore with great pleasure that I rise to voice the sentiments of this side of the house, in the official opposition, in congratulating the Prime Minister on the high distinction he has brought to Canada, in placing this country at the head of all other parts of the empire, including the old land itself, in his length of tenure of office as prime minister.

Personally I hope the Prime Minister will live for many years yet, and if he does retire, as he has intimated he will, I hope that in his days in private life he will be afforded the opportunity to write that which this country needs so much, his own memoirs; because, apart altogether from politics, those memoirs will cover a wide field and a long period, and will include those who went before the right hon. gentleman.

I felicitate the Prime Minister and wish him long life and good health.

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, we of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation join in felicitation of the Prime Minister on this occasion. It is indeed a remarkable achievement to have been prime minister of this great country for approximately twenty-one years. It is just over two hundred years since Sir Robert Walpole relinquished the reins of office, having been in reality and in very truth the first prime minister of any country now included in this great commonwealth of nations which share a common democratic heritage and common parliamentary institutions.