

(Translation):

Hon. L. René Beaudoin (Speaker of the House of Commons): Mr. Prime Minister, the Honourable the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here this afternoon to honour the memory of a Canadian who was Prime Minister of our country and who, in the course of a long and remarkable political career, rendered outstanding services: Sir Robert Laird Borden.

A few moments ago, in the presence of the present Right Honourable Prime Minister, and of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Henry Borden, Q.C., a nephew of Sir Robert Borden, unveiled a monument erected on Parliament Hill to remind future generations of our past glories and of the debt of gratitude which we owe to the builders of this nation.

We are therefore witnessing one of those great parliamentary occasions. The leaders of all parties unite in paying a nation's tribute to Sir Robert Laird Borden.

(Text):

Hon. Wishart McL. Robertson (Speaker of the Senate):

Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour to present the Prime Minister of Canada.

Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Co-chairman, Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. Borden, ladies and gentlemen: Just before we begin the heavy schedule of another session of Parliament, it is fitting that we should pause to pay tribute to one of the great figures in Canadian history, Sir Robert Borden.

I wish to congratulate Miss Frances Loring on the striking likeness and the excellent workmanship of the statue which Mr. Henry Borden unveiled a few minutes ago. She has expressed for the permanent records of our nation in a fashion more eloquent than words many of the fine characteristics of that distinguished statesman.

The Right Honourable Sir Robert Borden was born over one hundred years ago in the small rural community of Grand Pré, Nova Scotia, the native province of three of Canada's Prime Ministers. He is remembered particularly by us as Canada's Prime Minister during the First World War.

Much has been written about Canada's role in the first world war and no doubt much will be written in the future. This was one of the most critical periods of Canadian history. Much progress has been made since Confederation in the development of a strong and united nation, but the national fabric has never faced such a severe test and none could tell if it could withstand the strains imposed upon it.

Canadians were fortunate in those trying years to have as their leader a man of unquestionable integrity, a high sense of duty, a thoroughly trained mind and an exceptional capacity for unremitting hard work. Whatever opinions might be advanced on the policies which he pursued, his personal qualities and particularly his honesty and sincerity of purpose in seeking to serve his country well were outstanding.

Under Sir Robert Borden's leadership Canada made a contribution to the first world war which won the praise and admiration of her allies. In addition to his leadership at home, Sir Robert played an active role in the Imperial War Cabinet in London. He strove throughout the war to ensure that Canada should have a voice in the formulation of allied policy rather than limit her role to supplying men and material. With a wide and statesmanlike view of this country's capacities and her future, he sought to encourage his fellow citizens to accept their new and inevitable responsibilities.

In 1919 Sir Robert Borden was our chief plenipotentiary delegate at the Peace Conference in Paris, and in 1920 he signed the Treaty of Versailles as the representative of Canada on terms of equality with the representatives of the other allied nations. In the same year Canada was admitted as an original member of the League of Nations.

Another of Sir Robert's accomplishments at about the same time was to secure for Canada the right to have a minister plenipotentiary in Washington accredited by the King and appointed on the advice of the Canadian Cabinet. Such an appointment, however, was only made several years later. Sir Robert also suggested at the Imperial War Conference of 1918 that Canada should decide its own constitutional questions. This, as you know, was accomplished in the last few years.

In his book, "Canada in the Commonwealth", published after his retirement, he welcomed the definition of the relations of Great Britain and the dominion contained in the Balfour report as "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any respect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of nations."

"The dominions having sought and gained the status of nationhood", Sir Robert wrote, "they cannot recede from assumption of its responsibilities." And in the last lines of his book Sir Robert Borden expressed his