

Mr. A. de WITT FOSTER (Hants-Kings): Mr. Speaker, in rising to address the House, I feel very much in the position of the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa), who after an absence of eighteen years, told us the other day that his reappearance here was more ghost-like than real. I am glad that you have allowed some latitude in debate, because I want to avail myself of that privilege and the courtesy of the House. While I may not cover as many subjects as did the hon. member for Labelle, I can assure the House that I have one regret, namely, that whereas hon. members were repaid on that occasion with an eloquence as brilliant as any ever heard in this chamber, they will have to forego that pleasure in any remarks which I may make.

During the last ten years I have had the privilege of viewing such progress as Canada has made from a vantage point outside of the Dominion itself, working all that time, I may say, in the upbuilding of a greater Canada and devoting myself to those things which would make for the progress and advancement of this Dominion. I find many changes here in the last ten years, some of them very much for the better. This pile, magnificent in beauty and symmetry, has been erected on the old site of the House of Commons where you, Sir, and I sat some ten years ago, and erected I may observe under the supervision of the hon. member for South Winnipeg (Mr. Rogers) who at that time was Minister of Public Works. I take this opportunity of congratulating that hon. gentleman and the committee who worked with him on that occasion on the building of such a splendid structure. I would add by the way that in the interior of this structure a much needed improvement might be effected, and I would suggest that the committee of the House having charge of the matter might investigate one of the new things that have been devised for the comfort of mankind, in order to facilitate the transaction of business here. In particular I would mention a material called celotex made from the waste product of sugar cane known as bagasse, which is used for the purpose of deadening sound and thus increasing in a very material degree the acoustic properties of buildings of such vastness as this chamber. Having acted for twelve or fourteen months as publicity counsel for the manufacturers of this article I came more or less in contact with the great work they were doing in the United States and I know that there are many public buildings there, some as large as this, which are now equipped with this device. I do not

wish by any means to give them a free advertisement in this House but I have, at least, a desire to improve the speaking facilities of the chamber and I can assure the government that such an improvement could be brought about with great benefit to all of us.

Speaking of the old building, I am naturally reminded of things that create in me some feelings of sadness. In the burning of that building I barely escaped with my own life, while one of the hon. members of this House at that time, a representative from the province of Nova Scotia, in the person of the late Mr. B. B. Law, was less fortunate. I wish even at this late day, inasmuch as I had not at the time an opportunity to extend my sympathy to his family, to place on record my feelings of sorrow and at the same time my appreciation of the services which that gentleman had always rendered to his country. I desire also to sympathize with those of his family who have remained. I recall also another fellow member of that time who passed into the great beyond while in the service of the country. I am sure that hon. gentlemen who pass in and out of this chamber must have a kindly thought, tinged though it may be with the sadness of recollection, of the services rendered by the late Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Baker, at one time the member for Brome. I want to place myself on Hansard in appreciation of this House in its tribute paid to that gallant gentleman, a tribute which will stand for years and years to come.

I am reminded, while speaking of days gone by, that when I first entered the House as a young man I was impressed with the personality of many men and among those who impressed me then none did so to a greater degree than did the then leader of the opposition who has since passed on, the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In those years, inexperienced as I was in business and struggling with problems in which it requires a long probation in a young man's life to bring him to an adequate knowledge of human nature, I had many times a kindly word from that right hon. gentleman who led the government of this Dominion for fifteen years from 1896 to 1911 and who thereafter served as leader of the opposition. I was impressed with the dignified and stately way in which he rose on all occasions during my time in this House to present the views of His Majesty's loyal opposition, and I am sure, Sir, that the public life of Canada is the poorer for his having passed.