

THE PRIME MINISTER

FELICITATIONS ON COMPLETING HIS TWENTIETH
YEAR IN OFFICE

"Right Hon. IAN A. MACKENZIE (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has to leave about seven minutes after three o'clock to welcome a distinguished international statesman, the President of the great neighbour at our gates. Apart from these international courtesies which will be very close to our hearts, we have occasion to observe a national courtesy of the first order.

Today is a significant one in our history. As usual, I am at the side of the right hon. gentleman who today has been twenty years Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada. We have our contentions here, our conflicts in debates, but on these larger occasions we are warm-hearted Canadians.

The Prime Minister is the dean of this house. He has enjoyed membership of this assembly for the twenty-eight years since 1919, with a few slight interruptions, and sat here for an additional period of three years, beginning in 1908.

May I leave with the house a practical way some of his record in the office of prime minister: From December 29, 1921, to June 28, 1926, 1,643 days; from September 25, 1926, to August 7, 1930, 1,413 days; from October 23, 1935, to the present hour, 4,249 days, a total of 7,305 days.

I must be brief. I wish I could speak longer, but I must not. The right hon. gentleman will pardon me, I think, if I mention four or five of the great inspirational influences in his life. The first was his beloved mother, born in exile, beside whose portrait in Laurier House there is an abiding light. The second was that old chieftain of Quebec, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. I shall never forget, sir, the last words the present Prime minister used when Laurier was dead, recalling precious memories. I cannot quote them all:

It is the old man with his bare head and his white hair, standing alone, fighting for the right as God gave him to see the right.

Again the inspirational voice of his illustrious grandfather, the rebel patriot of Canada:

Well may I love the poor; greatly may I esteem the humble and the lowly, for poverty and adversity were my nurses, and in youth were want and misery my familiar friends; even now it yields a sweet satisfaction to my soul that I can claim kindred with the obscure cotter and the humble labourer of my native, ever-honoured, ever-loved Scotland.

Another great influence in his life was Louis Pasteur. Most of us are familiar with just a word from a favourite quotation:

Two contrary laws seem to be wrestling with each other nowadays; the one, a law of blood and of death, ever imagining new means of destruction, and forcing nations to be constantly ready for the battlefield—the other, a law of peace, work and health, ever evolving new means of delivering man from the scourges which beset him.

Then in war, in 1939, most of us were here and remember the Prime Minister's words. I wish I could quote them all but I cannot. I remember that he said:

I never dreamed that the day would come when, after spending a lifetime in a continuous effort to promote and to preserve peace and good will in international as well as in industrial relations, it should fall to my lot to be the one to lead this dominion of Canada into a great war; but that responsibility I assume with a sense of being true to the very blood that is in my veins. I assume it in the defence of freedom—the freedom of my fellow countrymen here, the freedom of those whose lives are unprotected in other communities and countries, the freedom of mankind itself.

Victory crowned our efforts. With the consent of the house I am going back across the ocean to Scotland for a moment, to quote some words from one of the poets of Scotland, Neil Munro, of Inveraray:

Though hails may beat us and the great mists blind us,

And lightning rend the pine-tree on the hill
Yet are we strong, yet shall the morning find us
Children of tempest all unshaken still!

One last word and I am through. Our distinguished leader has known the golden promise of the dawn, the full glory of the noontide hour, the conscious satisfaction resulting from great achievements in the afternoon of life; and now, sir, in the mellow twilight, we wish him continued happiness and health and many more years of devoted service to Canada which we love and which he loves so much.

Mr. JOHN BRACKEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is not given to many men to be Prime Minister of Canada. Only eleven have held that position since confederation. The present Prime Minister is one of them. It is given to much fewer men to be Prime Minister of a democracy for twenty years. The right hon. gentleman has been Prime Minister of Canada for that long. As a matter of fact he has been Prime Minister of Canada for one-quarter of this nation's history. Whether he is to be blamed for one-quarter of the ills of all the people of Canada during that time I shall not discuss today, but I want it perfectly understood that I reserve the right to discuss it next week or next year.

On this occasion I want to express my congratulations to the Prime Minister upon