

*The Address—Mr. Argue*

I wish also to add my word of congratulations to the hon. member for Longueuil (Mr. Sevigny) on being elected Deputy Speaker, and to the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Rea), our friend in this house now for some years, on being elected chairman of committees. I am sure that they, too, will bring honour and dignity to their positions and will rule in fairness whenever the occasion arises.

*(Translation):*

I wish to extend my most sincere congratulations to the hon. member for Quebec-Montmorency (Mr. Lafreniere) for his excellent speech on the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

*(Text):*

The mover of the address in reply to the speech from the throne (Mr. Lafreniere) made a very commendable contribution for a new member, as did the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) and I know that members of this house are looking forward to further contributions from these hon. members.

Since this, apparently, is the time to extend congratulations to all possible hon. members I should like to add my congratulations—and they are sincere congratulations—to the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) and to hon. members of the Conservative party on their very outstanding victory in the recent election. I am sure that no government in recent years in this country carries with it support of the magnitude that this government has in the country—such good will and such good wishes as this government now enjoys. However, I do feel that because the government has such an overwhelming, almost all-powerful majority, many thousands of Canadians will be examining its work very meticulously; indeed I may say many have been doing that since the election and asking themselves whether or not they might have gone too far in giving the government such a tremendous majority.

I think the great victory which the Conservative party won was not really on March 31 when they obtained so many of their members but on June 10 a year ago. On that occasion the Conservative party did not obtain an over-all majority and when they went to the country last March the sportsmanlike people of this country—and that includes them all—gave great consideration to whether or not the government should be given a clear working majority. A lot of people asked themselves: should we not give the government a chance? Or, let's give John a chance. It was just as simple as

that. It seems as if countless people had the same idea; they went to the polls and voted the same way. I know that a lot of those people are thinking today that they should have considered giving the opposition a greater chance, and the government must tread very cautiously in its actions affecting the people of this country and affecting parliament in the days ahead or else the sympathy which the government had in the recent election will be with the opposition in the next election, and the very opposite result may follow.

We were pleased with the indication contained in the speech from the throne and referred to again today that the opposition will be given a greater opportunity to function in this parliament in certain respects than has been given to opposition parties in previous parliaments. The suggestion that a member of the opposition should serve as chairman of the public accounts committee is a good one and I think the government might well consider whether this could be extended to the chairmanship of other committees of the House of Commons. I am thinking particularly of the estimates committee which will be an important one and have referred to it the estimates of major departments of government. If that were done I believe it would receive acclaim from the people of this country.

The C.C.F. party did not fare well in the recent elections and of course the same thing can be said of other opposition parties. The strength of all opposition parties has been reduced substantially. As far as the C.C.F. group is concerned we lost not only strength in our numbers but among those we lost were very highly qualified members of the House of Commons. It was with extremely deep regret that we learned on election night that the national leader of this party, Mr. M. J. Coldwell, had gone down to defeat in his constituency of Rosetown-Biggan. When this was announced on television I understand that the C.B.C. commentator said it was a national disaster. Here was a man who for 23 years used his voice inside and outside parliament against injustice, intolerance and exploitation. He was a friend of the poor and the champion of the underprivileged and insecure. He was a man whose honesty, integrity and ability have been acknowledged and acclaimed by both political friend and foe alike. Those of us who worked with him in the C.C.F. in parliament have found him a true friend, a wise counsellor and above all a thorough democrat. Before I got to know Mr. Coldwell intimately I read in 1943 an excellent statement written about him by Professor Frank Scott and Mr. David Lewis who were at that time the C.C.F.