

Tributes to Mackenzie King

During and after World War I, Mr. King was at the centre of the turmoil and anxiety which stretched the cohesion of the nation and its political parties almost to the breaking point. He devoted his energies toward easing those tensions.

He was plunged into the realities of international negotiation where he developed a determination that Canada must be allowed to deal with her fellow nations on her own terms, with independence. This determination remained throughout his career.

He watched Canada suffer the despair and hardship of the great depression, and another tragic and costly world war. When he died in 1950, the nation was moving forward into an era of prosperity and, barring further madness, an era of peace.

These were great events requiring brilliance in politics, imagination in outlook and a strength of national purpose that would persistently prevent traditional cultural and regional divisions from pulling Canada apart.

Take a look at the stature of some of the political leaders in Mr. King's lifetime—Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Sir Robert Borden, J. S. Woodsworth, Arthur Meighen and Louis St. Laurent. These men were giants in Canadian history at a time when such qualities were imperative.

Mr. Speaker, in countless ways, recognized or subtle, Mr. King for 40 years placed his stamp on Canadian political life, parliament and the public service. His tenure as Prime Minister was longer than that of any other Prime Minister before him in the English speaking world.

Today I simply want to pay tribute to a Canadian statesman and politician who carries so many conflicting descriptions it is almost impossible to sort out the real Mackenzie King—which perhaps was a key to his great success.

Mr. Speaker, I feel partial to the particularly appropriate words of Bruce Hutchison who said:

His works proclaim themselves, but quietly. He wrought them so gradually, he who could move so fast and take so many desperate chances while appearing to stand still, and he could produce such drastic changes with a changeless look, that his revolutionary effect on the nation's life was dimly surmised when his own ended. But now we can see that he was our greatest revolutionary . . .

● (1450)

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to join the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of the late Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, a man who was in the forefront of politics and public life in this country in the first half of the present century. I think of Mr. King particularly in terms of his working toward the achievement of Canadian autonomy. As a student I recall studying international relations following the first World War, particularly those involving the United Kingdom, and becoming aware of his preoccupation with the achievement of full Canadian autonomy. This followed the movement forward achieved by Sir Robert Borden during and following the first World War. Mr. King, of course, was interested not only in Canadian autonomy, but in Canadian unity as well. It might not be an exaggeration to suggest that his work

[Mr. Trudeau.]

toward maintenance of Canadian unity was perhaps the dominating aspect of his political or public life.

As a young man I remember feeling desperately impatient about any move that Mr. King might be inclined to make, and feeling, particularly, that in many areas he lagged behind public opinion. Perhaps now I should not be inclined to make some of those criticisms. Perhaps now I should be prepared to admit that he was wiser than I thought at the time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I know he was intensely concerned with social reform. But it is not in that connection that I think of Mr. King. I think, rather, of the contribution he made to the achievement of full Canadian autonomy and the emphasis that he placed during his life on national unity. Frequently, he accepted a good deal of criticism in order to achieve what he considered to be his main goal.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, at the outset on this auspicious occasion let me make it perfectly clear, to echo something the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) frequently says, that I have not recently been in touch with the former prime minister whom we are discussing this afternoon. In all seriousness I wish, on behalf of my party, to pay tribute to William Lyon Mackenzie King for what he has contributed to the history of Canada. He played a crucial role during the years, momentous both in world history and Canadian history, 1939-45. I do not know of many other Canadians who could have done what he did in that period in holding this great and diverse country together. When the history of the time when he was Prime Minister of Canada is written, it will be seen that from 1939 to 1945 he made a very great contribution to our country. On that basis may I, on behalf of my colleagues, join with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to the late William Lyon Mackenzie King.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it, today is the day of the great Canadian politicians in the House of Commons.

Shortly before the statement made by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), another member has brought to the fore another great Canadian, the Leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada (Mr. Caouette).

Mr. Speaker, as a very young man, I have had the privilege to see and hear Mr. King, then Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. Instinctively, I understood that there was a prominent political leader who could express his thoughts very easily and who knew how to communicate the essential of his thoughts to the people he was addressing.

I instantly felt a great admiration for this political leader. I said to myself: One day, perhaps, God permitting, I shall have the opportunity to know others and to take part in the parliamentary business with all the other members.

Providence managed very well. We have the advantage to know today political men of great stature. One may not always agree with their views, their thoughts, but one