

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Speaker: The Honourable PIERRE-FRANÇOIS CASGRAIN

MONDAY, February 15, 1937.

The house met at three o'clock.

PRIVILEGE—MR. BENNETT

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to mention a question of privilege. On Friday last, at page 915 of Hansard, I referred to Doctor Coulter as a member of this House of Commons. The Doctor Coulter to whom I referred was not a member of the House of Commons. He was a practising physician at Aurora when he was appointed to the position of deputy postmaster general. I was endeavouring to make the point that he had had no previous experience. I desire to correct the error that he was a member of this house.

The SPEAKER: The correction will be made accordingly.

THE LATE MATTHEW MCKAY

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, hon. members will have observed from this morning's press that since the house adjourned on Friday evening last another hon. member has been taken from our midst by the hand of death. The member for Renfrew North, Doctor Matthew McKay. Doctor McKay's death is the fifth since its last session, that has taken place in the membership of this house; he is the fourth hon. member to have been taken from this side of the house.

Doctor McKay was one of the oldest members of parliament. There seems to have been some doubt as to whether he was the oldest member of this house. I believe it is a fact that Doctor McKay was born in Simcoe county, Ontario, on October 5, 1855. In terms of actual years, therefore, it would appear that he was the oldest member of the House of Commons. Be that as it may, his appearance certainly belied his years; few men of advanced years have appeared keener or more active than did Doctor McKay. His vivid personality and his energetic ways would have led one to believe that he was nearer sixty than eighty.

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It is a little difficult for those who were not in the house with Doctor McKay from 1921 to 1925 to appreciate, what his life meant to this House of Commons and to the country, or how keen was his interest in politics. Indeed, it is difficult to judge from the doctor's years in parliament how continuous, how keen and persistent was his interest in public affairs. He was in point of fact, a member of this House of Commons only during the present parliament and the parliament of 1921 to 1925, though he was a candidate in the general elections of 1926 and of 1930. He took in the house very little part in debate; singularly enough, while he was fearless and outspoken on the public platform, owing to a certain timidity of nature or reserve he hesitated to speak to any extent in the House of Commons. The number of speeches was very very few indeed. It would be a mistake, however, to attempt to measure, simply by his achievements in the House of Commons, the influence in public life of one who has played an important part in public affairs. It would be indeed unfortunate for public life itself if the most useful public activities were necessarily restricted to membership in parliament. Doctor McKay all through his life had been deeply interested not only in municipal affairs of the community in which he lived, but also in provincial politics and federal politics. He was one who believed it was possible to render great service to his country through serving well the political party whose interests he believed it was best for him to serve. He looked upon a party not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end, a means whereby men and women who feel and think alike on great problems are able to unite their efforts to ensure the putting into effect of principles and policies in which they believe. It is difficult to express how much a political party owes to men of Doctor McKay's type. Their politics are based upon principle, and for principle they are prepared to make almost any sacrifice, no matter how great. They never know the meaning of defeat. To them the justice of the cause is everything.