

*House of Commons*

which he has been elevated and the large obligations which he has had to assume, both as leader of his party and Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition and I for a long time occupied neighbouring constituencies and therefore I have known him for a number of years. I am quite sure all of us hope he will retain good health and strength in order that he may carry on the work that is demanded of this very important office. Too many of those who have assumed high office in this country, as leader of the opposition or in other capacity, have broken down under the strain.

I join in the regret expressed by the Prime Minister, regarding the loss from this house of the former leader of the opposition. I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition that I hope, in spite of the efforts he will make to build up his party to a more influential position than it has had for a large number of years, he will take care of his health, because that is of primary importance.

**Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River):** We would like to join with the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the leader of the C.C.F. party, Mr. Speaker, in extending a very warm welcome to the newly elected leader of the official opposition in this house. We congratulate him on his elevation to that very important position. We recognize fully the great responsibilities that do devolve on a leader of the opposition. Good government in Canada has to depend to a very large degree on the quality of the opposition and the leadership in that opposition; that is very important.

I should like to express one word of caution and advice, as has already been expressed by my friend the leader of the C.C.F., and it is this. I think that to safeguard his health the Leader of the Opposition ought to relax. Since, as the Prime Minister has said, he is going to have plenty of time he can do his work without working under tension and stress, because that is what kills. If he will take a word of advice from me he will take better care of himself than some others have done, including myself. I do wish him every success and warmly congratulate him. He is a westerner. He has been a good friend of mine throughout the years, and I am glad to see him elevated to this very important position.

**Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition):** My first words, Mr. Speaker, must be to express my deep and abiding appreciation for the very warm sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister and by the leaders of the C.C.F. and Social Credit parties. I am one of those who, over the years, have known all of these gentlemen, the Prime Minister and the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan before I came into this house. I love this chamber, for however much we may dis-

[Mr. Coldwell.]

agree—and when strong men have strong opinions on occasion they use strong language to express them—we retain that conformity with the tradition of respect for one another. It is in that spirit that I thank the Prime Minister and the other hon. members for what they have said.

I want to thank the Prime Minister, too, for those very chivalrous words that he expressed regarding my wife, words that were full of kindness and consideration and represent something of what we so often forget in this chamber, the contribution that our helpmates make to us in order to permit us to remain in public life.

The Prime Minister referred, somewhat eulogistically, to my endeavours to speak one of the two official languages. May I be permitted, with diffidence which I do feel, to reply to him as best I may. With the indulgence of the house I should like to say this, Mr. Speaker.

*(Translation):*

I appreciate the generous references made by the Prime Minister in the French language and with diffidence I hope that the day will come when I shall be able to express myself with greater ease and assurance in that beautiful language.

*(Text):*

That will be my endeavour, realizing the difficulties that I will experience in that regard. Over the years I have endeavoured, as you know, sir, to anticipate the day that I would do so. Over five years ago, at the parliamentary conference in Australia, I told you of my desire, but my extreme diffidence.

The Prime Minister has mentioned the position of the opposition, recognized as it is in our democratic tradition as a basic element of parliamentary government. Some there are of the communist states that claim to have parliamentary democracies, but the salient differences between those democracies and ours may be summarized in a few words. Oppositions do not exist in the tradition of communist countries. The essence of our system of government, the basic foundation, is the right of each of us to disagree. The Prime Minister paraphrased, I think, the words of Tierney, who over 140 years ago said, as I recall it, "The function of an opposition is to propose nothing, to oppose everything and to turn out the government." With the first two obligations, I am in disagreement, but I say, sir, that in this year of grace the third would seem to be one worthy of adoption.

As the Prime Minister showed such an intimate knowledge of the responsibilities of an opposition, I hope the opportunity will come to him and to Canada to display that knowledge.