

Parliament Hill

erection of a statue on Parliament Hill in honour of the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a brief contribution to this debate. First, I sense that the House will give unanimous agreement to this motion by the Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria), which should be welcomed very much. I hope the appropriate action will be taken with the passage of this motion because I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett) that nothing could be more appropriate than to have these two gladiators, as she called them, honoured with statues of both of them on Parliament Hill.

With all due respect to the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, perhaps I could speak for a younger generation. I was 12 when the Diefenbaker Government fell in 1963. I was actively interested in politics even then and not only remember the night that that Government fell, but I recall that entire period. I believe it is instructive to remind the House of that period in the context of this Parliament. I believe the Prime Minister referred to it today, if I heard him correctly, and it was a time when the two gladiators in their respective Parties were at odds with each other over who would form the Government of Canada.

I suspect that Parliament was viewed then as it is now by many Canadians. Perhaps our agreeing to honour the other of those two Leaders is a reflection of the general view that, with the passage of time, there is a point at which we can put matters into historical perspective. In saying this, I do not in any way diminish the concern which Canadians may have about how the political process has operated recently.

When I first joined the Committee on Parliamentary Reform in the last Parliament, I read, among other research documents, an essay written about Parliament in 1935. This essay was from a book entitled *Social Planning For Canada*, which is a collection of founding documents for the CCF. That article about Parliament explained that Parliament, which was supposed to be a place for intelligent debate and the real expression of opinion, had fallen into disrepute. It contained a series of criticisms about Parliament which, if the dates and the few references to personalities were removed, could have applied to Parliaments in 1935, 1975, 1985 or, more relevant to the debate today, 1965. Perhaps it is worth reflecting on the fact that Parliament has never been what people have expected. Perhaps it puts into perspective our agreement to erect a statue of Mr. Pearson as well as explaining what is happening in Parliament today.

I also believe that the passage of this motion will represent one small victory for parliamentary reform because it will be another of the few occasions so far when the House has acted within the parliamentary reform Private Members' Business.

In closing, let me support the view that not only those who have been fortunate to become Prime Ministers should be

honoured with a statue on Parliament Hill. There are many others, some of whom were mentioned by the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, who should also be considered as candidates to be honoured. Being the Prime Minister in a Government is not the measure of political achievement. There are many people who have come to this Chamber over the years, either as leaders or Members of Parliament, who have made very significant contributions to the political process and the country, precisely because they did not have the personal ambition to become the Prime Minister of Canada. I believe we have such a person sitting at the Table here every day. We should keep this in mind when we talk about honouring our leaders.

I am pleased to support the motion to honour Lester B. Pearson, who I understand was responsible for introducing into federal politics the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), who celebrates the anniversary of his election to this Chamber today. I look forward to his speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour and a privilege to take part in this debate today, because in about two hours from now, it will be 23 years ago that I became a Member of Parliament for the first time, when Lester B. Pearson was Prime Minister of Canada. I was going to read through all these notes I have in front of me, but with the Chair's permission, I would rather speak from the heart as well as from the mind, something Parliamentarians are often reluctant to do. I see some young Canadians working in the House who will probably be delighted to hear all this and will probably be hearing it for the first time. I have some memories which I would like to share with you today.

[*English*]

In a couple of hours, it will be 23 years ago that I was elected for the first time to serve in the Canadian Parliament. I want to speak about the man who helped me—some say ensured—that I would be chosen as a delegate in Montreal Saint-Denis to replace the Hon. Postmaster General of the day, Azellus Denis, who is in the Senate. I am told that when I came out of university he helped in my being chosen in a very open and contested nomination. I was chosen and elected.

• (1730)

It is no secret that I have always admired Mr. Pearson. I had known Mr. Pearson since I was a young student. In fact, on January 31, 1958, and I am going by memory now, I was a young delegate for my Party from Quebec, and one of the very few Quebecers for my Party, a Francophone, who supported Mr. Pearson. I was a student escort to Madam Pearson, who is still alive today. Due to her health, she may not be able to listen to our debate, but she is still alive today, I know. I am sure his family, his son, daughter and grandson, who works on the Hill, will be watching. I want to say I had great admiration for that man. I learned a lot from Mr. Pearson. I learned patience and compromise, but the right kind of compromise.