

I now table the orders in council relevant to the appointments I have just mentioned.

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

RETIREMENT OF MR. BRACKEN AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION—WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS
—THE LATE LUCIEN DUBOIS

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Since the last session of parliament there have been changes not only on this side of the house but some rather important changes on the other side as well. We were all chagrined to learn some months ago that the health of the hon. member for Neepawa (Mr. Bracken) had become impaired and that he had decided it was necessary to relinquish the arduous duties of leader of the opposition, and what were perhaps for him the still more arduous duties of leader of his party. The hon. member has had a long and distinguished career in public life. Unless I am mistaken as to the exact details, he was for twenty years premier of Manitoba before being selected as leader of the party which under his leadership chose to call itself the Progressive Conservative party. Already he had made great contributions to the agricultural life of western Canada, and thereby to the welfare of the whole of Canada.

I am sure it will not surprise him if I say here today that when he accepted the leadership of the Conservative party many of us who knew of and admired his previous career had some misgivings about the company in which he was going to find himself.

Mr. Graydon: Page Mike Pearson.

Mr. St. Laurent: Well, of course, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) is still young, but I think he believes he finds himself in pretty good company; and it so happens that a great many people in this country share the same belief.

Obviously the hon. member for Neepawa had some slight misgivings himself, because at that time we understood he had insisted upon the members of that party calling themselves Progressive Conservatives; but in spite of their willingness to call themselves anything he chose, we felt he would be tackling a hopeless task if he were to attempt to make them over into the kind of broad-shouldered, common-man Progressive he had shown himself to be during the years of his administration in the province of Manitoba. The fact that he has found it could not be done does not detract in the slightest degree from our admiration of his venturesome courage.

During the time the hon. gentleman has been in this house he has discharged his task faithfully and in the best traditions of parliament. Naturally those on this side have differed with him on a good many things, but there has been no acrimony. Our relations with him have always been most cordial. We admire him for what he has done; we regret that his health has become impaired, and we sincerely hope that it will be rapidly restored. We cannot be expected to wish him success at the polls at the next election, but we do wish him good health and happiness in the future.

Now may I extend most cordial greetings to the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Drew) upon having entered this chamber. I think it fair to say that most members of the house welcome him here today, and we congratulate him upon the confidence his party has placed in him.

The position of leader of the opposition is a very high and honourable one. It requires a rare combination of qualities, a knowledge of public affairs and the ability to criticize firmly and boldly on proper occasions, but also the ability to discriminate between proper occasions and times when mere wordy outpourings would be anything but constructive. It also requires an acquaintance with parliamentary procedure and the desire to co-operate in the conduct of public affairs.

The hon. member for Carleton has great natural endowments, and he has had the training and experience necessary to provide one with a proper grasp of public affairs. I am sure that he and I will, on many occasions, disagree. We shall probably, however, be able to co-operate in maintaining and upholding the constitutional traditions and customs of parliament which experience has shown to be the best safeguards of truly democratic institutions.

I also wish to say a word of welcome to the other hon. members who have been presented this day to the Speaker. I am sure they will find that in joining this company they have entered into a field in which there is an opportunity to be of real service to Canada and Canadians, perhaps not only to the Canada and Canadians of our generation but also to the Canada and Canadians of generations to come.

(Translation):

I take pleasure in welcoming two new French-speaking Liberal members, Mr. W. A. Boucher, representing Rosthern, and Mr. Leopold Demers, member for Laval-Two Mountains.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!