

[Translation]

No matter what, our new colleagues are assured of our support and cooperation as they carry out their new duties.

Hon. Marcel Prud'Homme: I understand from the press that there is a new majority taking shape in the Senate, as they say that there are now 51 Conservatives, 50 Liberals and three Independent Liberals. I would like to speak only for myself as a true Independent, however, leaving the others to say whatever they wish to say.

I would like to speak at length on the appointment of the four senators. I know that some people are very impatient because it is claimed that I speak too often and on just about every topic. I am delighted to hear Senator Gigantès applaud, for he has in the past taken considerable advantage of the same right I allow myself today. I take no offence, however, because we are friends.

I could speak at some length of a gentleman who sat with me in the House of Commons. I was there when he arrived, I left him behind, and now here he is again. You will have guessed that I am speaking of Senator Rompkey.

As for Senator Milne, I know her indirectly through her husband and colleague, Mr. Ross. I know that it is clear from the list of all of her accomplishments that this is a person who has made a contribution to Canadian life.

[English]

I wish to know more. I must admit that I know less than Senator Anderson. I want to ensure that my sentiments today are equal in welcoming her to our midst.

[Translation]

I have reserved my closing remarks for Senator Poulin, whom I know a bit better. I would like to state that I know far more good things about her than have been mentioned. I wish her a most cordial welcome.

To those among the Liberals who are listening, let me say this: This is a woman of highly independent spirit, a brilliant and intelligent person, like the others who have come with her. Knowing her better than the others here in the Senate do, with the exception of perhaps two or three honourable senators, I would not be surprised, however, if some day the independent spirit she has always shown in the past makes her aware that in the Senate there is truly a place for people of independent spirit. At any rate, I wish her the most cordial, the warmest, the friendliest of welcomes.

THE LATE HONOURABLE JEAN NOËL DESMARAIS

TRIBUTES

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Leader of the Opposition): It was with great sadness that we heard in late July that our colleague the Honourable Jean Noël Desmarais had passed away. Although he was with us only two years, his contributions to the proceedings in this chamber were of the same high calibre as those he made throughout a life dedicated to his fellow citizens in Northern Ontario.

[Senator Lynch-Staunton]

[English]

Senator Desmarais made a lasting contribution to the improvement of health services in Northern Ontario. His efforts were an invaluable factor in the founding of Laurentian Hospital and the establishment of a regional cancer treatment centre in Sudbury. He was initially a member, then Chairman of the Board of Laurentian University, of which his father was a founder and first board chairman. He also served on many professional and government advisory committees. To all these activities, he gave his total devotion and the benefit of his experience and wisdom, while still finding time to pursue an active career as Chief of Radiology and Medical Director at both St. Joseph Hospital and Laurentian Hospital. Only failing eyesight forced him to retire, as he felt that he could no longer give to the field of radiology the excellence which he insisted it deserved and which he brought to it.

[Translation]

Dr. Desmarais brought this unique experience with him when he became a senator, which again confirms how fortunate the Upper House is to benefit from the extensive knowledge of its members. His speeches here in the Senate were not many in number — and sometimes very low-key — but they were always received with the kind of attention that reflected the immense respect he enjoyed among his colleagues here in the Senate, in committee or in caucus.

[English]

Senator Desmarais knew that his cancer was inoperable last April, ironically on his seventy-first birthday. Despite the shocking news, he carried on until his last breath with extraordinary courage, even good humour. Many honourable senators are familiar with the remarks he made to the Sudbury and District Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society on May 10. He said in part:

It helps me spiritually, as a Roman Catholic, to think that Jesus came into the world to save me. He is a very smart cookie and a very capable one, and I cannot believe that he would not succeed. Therefore, I accept and believe that I am leaving this world and entering the next in good shape and I thank God for all the good blessings that I have had.

Indeed, in life as in death, he was a good person.

[Translation]

To his wife, Colette, and to the entire family, I wish to offer my most sincere condolences and also my thanks for allowing us to have in our midst a great man whose memory will endure.

[English]

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, we on this side wish to join with Senator Lynch-Staunton's remarks in honouring the memory of our colleague, Senator John Noël Desmarais of Sudbury, who passed away this summer, three months after being diagnosed with lung cancer.