

*Awards and Decorations*

tinue as at present to receive recommendations for awards made by an advisory council headed by the Chief Justice of Canada. In the case of the Order of Military Merit, of which the Governor General is also Chancellor, the names of the proposed recipients will be submitted by the Canadian Forces Decorations Committee through the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Minister of National Defence. In conferring the new decorations for heroism, the Governor General will be assisted by a bravery awards advisory committee. The high regard in which the Order of Canada is held derives from the high standards it sets and the impartiality of the selection process. The new arrangements will continue to insist upon high standards and impartiality. I should like to emphasize that, as with the Order of Canada up till now, any citizen has the right to nominate anyone he feels to be worthy for an honour in any of the classifications I have announced today.

[Translation]

In this symbolic fashion, the government seeks to create a means of expressing the gratitude of all Canadians to those of their fellows who have contributed to the quality of life in this country through acts of service, excellence and bravery.

Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 41(2), I would like to table copies of the relevant Orders in Council, the text of the Letters Patent, the constitution of the Order of Canada and the Order of Military Merit and regulations governing the award of Canadian Bravery Decorations.

[English]

**Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque):** Mr. Speaker, the statement the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has just made is a very important one and I wish to thank him for giving us advance notice of its contents. This is not to say, however, that the notice was sufficient, in view of the importance of the matter, to enable me to deal with it comprehensively at this time.

The Prime Minister said in his statement:

Of those many ingredients which, together, are nationhood, one of the most important is the voluntary desire on the part of citizens to contribute to national life. A grateful nation should be willing to recognize and honour those persons whose contributions are truly outstanding, and to this end the government has sought advice from many elements of our society.

He went on to say:

In this symbolic fashion, the government seeks to create a means of expressing the gratitude of all Canadians to those of their fellows who have contributed to the quality of life in this country through acts of service, excellence and bravery.

I agree wholeheartedly with the sentiments expressed in these statements by the Prime Minister. I should like to point out, however, that the lack, for long periods, of recognition and honour due to those Canadians whose contributions have been truly outstanding has not been because of the absence of any mechanism for doing so but rather because of the fact that this and many other Canadian governments have refrained from making recommendations to Her Majesty in this regard, presumably because the decorations or orders that were provided for in the past were common to most or all of the Commonwealth. It is for that reason that the honours and

[Mr. Trudeau.]

awards now established have been created as a substitute to fill the void that was thus brought into being.

Turning now to the awards themselves, I believe that the creation of a third group, Members of the Order of Canada, is an improvement. I believe, too, that the establishment of a Canadian Order of Military Merit will fill a great need for our Canadian forces, especially in peacetime operations. The creation of three Canadian decorations for bravery, for which both military and civilian persons are eligible, is welcome.

The statement of the Prime Minister leaves two important questions unanswered. First, will the world-renowned, Commonwealth-wide decorations such as the Victoria Cross, the George Medal and the D.S.O. still be available to Canadian citizens as Canadian decorations in future? Second, what will be the order of precedence of the Commonwealth-wide decorations that have been conferred on Canadians in the past relative to these new decorations? I presume that the documents the Prime Minister has tabled will designate that. I would certainly hope that world-renowned decorations such as the Victoria Cross, the George Medal and many others will retain their pre-eminence and their precedence.

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, my comment will be brief. I am pleased, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to greet with pleasure the Prime Minister's announcement. We have, as is well known, always supported the idea that Canada should have its own program and procedures for recognizing outstanding achievement and service by Canadians in all fields. I am particularly pleased because the Prime Minister's announcement will enable a great many more Canadians to be involved in the program of recognition.

I readily agree, Sir, that the Order of Canada is highly respected and that the selection of Canadians for that order has been of a high and objective character. The addition of a level aimed to extend recognition to Canadians for services rendered at the local level deserves full support, since it will make possible a wider recognition of achievement and devoted service by Canadians.

• (1420)

We are also happy to welcome the establishment of an Order of Military Merit in recognition of outstanding bravery. I hope, as I am sure all Members of Parliament do, that our forces will never again have to defend our freedom and our country in war. It is, therefore, most fitting that we recognize their important services to Canada and to the world in peacetime.

The Prime Minister has so well and in so literate a way explained the reasons for the program of decorations he has announced that it would be superfluous for me to add anything more. I merely say that we warmly welcome his announcement.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard with some satisfaction the announcement which the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has just made concerning the creation of the Order of Military Merit.