

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 21, 1979

The House met at 2 p.m.

● (1405)

[English]

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

INTENTION TO STEP DOWN AS LEADER OF LIBERAL PARTY—
TRIBUTES TO ROLE PLAYED FOR CANADA AND PARLIAMENT—
MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like the permission of the House to move, under Standing Order 43, a motion which is seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles):

That this House express its gratitude and appreciation to the Right Honourable the Leader of the Opposition for his service to the House, his party and country, and expresses its hope that he will continue, as the Right Honourable Member for Mount Royal, to contribute his formidable talents to Parliament and to Canada.

[*Editor's Note: Members of the House stood and applauded.*]

Mr. Speaker: It is my pleasure to record that the unanimous consent of the House was given to the presentation of the motion and that it was obviously adopted unanimously.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Cape Breton Highlands-Canso): Mr. Speaker, if you are putting the motion, I would like to say a word on it.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. It is moved by Mr. Clark, seconded by Mr. Knowles:

That this House express its gratitude and appreciation to the Right Honourable the Leader of the Opposition for his service to this House, his party and country, and expresses its hope that he will continue, as the Right Honourable Member for Mount Royal, to contribute his formidable talents to Parliament and to Canada.

Mr. MacEachen: Because this is a debatable motion I would like to take a few minutes to speak to it. I begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) for putting the motion to the House, which was received on both sides with great enthusiasm.

For myself, I would like publicly to say what I said to the leader of my party; that is, how deeply saddened I am at the decision he has taken to step down from the leadership of the Liberal party. It has been my view since the last election that the right hon. member for Mount Royal (Mr. Trudeau) could continue to lead our party and could succeed in returning this party to office in the future.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1410)

Mr. MacEachen: That is my belief, has been my belief, and it is my belief today; though I do respect the decision that has been taken by the leader of the Liberal party. I want to say, in conclusion, that every one of us sitting on this side of the House has been totally behind our leader in his leadership. In making the decision he has made today, he makes it with the full knowledge that he still has our total support.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: And he will continue to have our respect, admiration and affection.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands-Canso (Mr. MacEachen) has pointed out, this is a debatable motion. But I would not want to talk it out; I am afraid that if we talk past 2.15, it might not be carried. I wish to thank the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) for naming me seconder of the motion. I am happy to associate the members of my party with the tributes and good wishes to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Trudeau) contained in the motion.

It has been a pleasure for many of us to be associated with the right hon. member for Mount Royal through his years in Parliament. His contribution to the country cannot be gainsaid. He has been subject to criticism, but he knows best of all that the one way not to receive criticism is to do nothing at all. That has not been the story of his life.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: This is hardly the day to predict the outcome of the next election, but we are happy to join with the House in this tribute to the Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Fabien Roy (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, had the motion required another seconder needless to say I would have been pleased to act as such. I wish to join those who have paid tribute on this occasion and speak on behalf of my colleagues, because under such circumstances I think it is appropriate to forget partisanship and to pay homage to an individual who as Prime Minister has devoted more than ten years of his life to his political party, his fellow Canadians and his country. We