

*Courts Amendment Act*

With respect to the appointment of judges, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am interested in appointing nothing but first-class, qualified men and women as judges across this country. Everyone will be considered no matter what their beliefs might be. I intend to consult the provincial Attorneys General during the process of appointment of judges. They will not be ignored, as in some cases they were in the past. There will be a definite process of consultation with the provincial Attorneys General and Ministers of Justice before judicial appointments are made. There will be consultation, of course, with the Chief Justices of the courts and other colleagues, as well as Hon. Members of this House, in order to have their views as to people they think should be considered for judicial appointment. We will be happy to receive any suggestions, which we will look into and ensure that consideration is given.

● (1125)

Of course, we will continue the practice of referring those under consideration for judicial appointment to a committee of the Canadian Bar Association for review and evaluation. To date we have not made any judicial appointments but there will be some coming up in the immediate future, including an appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada which, of course, is very important.

Mr. Justice Ritchie has had to retire due to ill health. He would have retired by next June in any event, having reached the statutory age of 75, but because of the state of his health he has retired a few months earlier. I would like to congratulate him on his long judicial career in the Supreme Court of Canada. He was appointed by Prime Minister Diefenbaker and his Government in, I think, 1959 and has had a most distinguished judicial career. I well remember him as the federal counsel to the royal commission which investigated the terms of union between Newfoundland and Canada. I hope that Mr. Justice Ritchie's health will improve as he retires from the bench, and that he will have a long and healthy retirement having performed a great service to his fellow Canadians in his position on the Supreme Court of Canada in recent years.

In ending these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure Members of the House that I am fully cognizant of the responsibility imposed on us to ensure the proper functioning of the judicial system. The courts are now the forum in which we are trying to define our contemporary social goals. They are there to arbitrate conflicting points of view which will be put forward on fundamental issues involving everyone in this country. They have a very difficult task and I will do what I can to assist them in the time that I am here as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. We are stressing co-operation with the provinces and I intend to see that there is co-operation and consultation with the provinces. I believe that the unpleasant situation which arose in Saskatchewan in recent years concerning the number of judges is about to be terminated. It should be resolved within the next several weeks, I am glad to say.

I just wanted to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to outline some of the matters that will be coming before Members of the House in the justice area and the way that I will approach my task, non-partisan, fair and objective as ever. As any of the Members who have been here before will know, I always try to act objectively and in a non-partisan manner. I am sorry to see there is only a rump left on the other side who, of course, can testify to that.

**Mr. Waddell:** Short-term pain for long-term gain.

**Mr. Crosbie:** When I see that short-term rump opposite me, 40 on the left and 30 on the right, I must say it was much easier in this House when I was on the other side because I did not have to look at the NDP. We could ignore the fact that they were there. Now I am struck with the brutal reality of having to face them every day.

**Mr. Waddell:** It beats Joey Smallwood.

**Mr. Crosbie:** It is certainly a daunting task to see the spurious indignation gather on their brows as they rise to ask a question. But I have no doubt that our colleagues opposite in the Liberal ranks will quickly develop the same amount of spurious indignation and vainglorious air that the NDP have. But they will keep us on our toes.

I want to congratulate the former Solicitor General on his new position as justice critic. The hon. gentleman, who is now the financial critic for the Opposition, is not here today, but it was just several months ago that he became Minister of Justice. Early in June he was appointed by the now Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) as Minister of Justice. As I said at his roast a week or two ago, lo and behold, within three months justice had triumphed! Now he is the finance critic and I am the Minister of Justice. This is the reward you get for all your hard work, Mr. Speaker!

● (1130)

So now, justice having triumphed, we are here and I look forward in the next three or four years to the Opposition keeping us on our toes. The more effective they can be, the better it will be for us. I invite them to ask me the toughest, meanest, dirtiest kinds of questions they can, and I will respond in my usual statesman-like fashion. I move second reading of the Bill.

**Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in taking the floor for the first time as justice critic I would like to respond to the warm good wishes of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) and extend my own warm good wishes to him. I know he does not have the job that he wanted. At least, I understand that he does not have the job that he wanted. However, I gathered from his exposé of his priorities that he is moving forward into what I have certainly always considered a job of vital importance to Canada and to all Canadians.

I would like to address for a moment the menu that he laid out of his plans for the coming parliamentary session. I look forward to dealing with all the issues which he raised. I must