

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 9, 1979

• (1035)

FIRST SESSION—THIRTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT

[*English*]

The Thirtieth Parliament having been dissolved by proclamation on Monday, March 26, 1979, and writs having been issued and returned, a new Parliament was summoned to meet for the dispatch of business on Tuesday, October 9, 1979, and did accordingly meet on that day.

Tuesday, October 9, 1979

This being the day on which Parliament is convoked by proclamation of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government of Canada for the dispatch of business, and the members of the House being assembled:

• (1040)

C. B. Koester, Esquire, the Clerk of the House, read to the House a letter that the Honourable Ronald Martland, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber to open the first session of the Thirty-first Parliament of Canada on this day, Tuesday, the ninth of October, 1979, at 10.30 a.m.

A message was delivered by Colonel T. G. Bowie, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Members of the House of Commons:

It is the desire of the Honourable the Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada that this honourable House attend him immediately in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the House went up to the Senate chamber, when the Speaker of the Senate said:

Honourable members of the Senate, and members of the House of Commons:

I have it in command to let you know that the Honourable the Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada does not see fit to declare the causes of his summoning the present Parliament of Canada until the Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen according to law, but this afternoon, at the hour of three o'clock, His Excellency the Governor General of Canada will declare the cause of calling this Parliament.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

HON. JAMES JEROME, MEMBER FOR THE ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF SUDBURY

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Dr. Koester, the time has now come to proceed to the appointment of a candidate as Speaker of the House of Commons, a privilege long bestowed on the Prime Minister. The Deputy Governor General has just told us that the Prime Minister cannot state the reasons for convening Parliament until such time as a Speaker has been elected, because without a Speaker we are but a group of men and women and not a House of Commons. The Speaker is indeed our spokesman.

The first Speakers elected by their parliamentary colleagues had the responsibility of speaking to the sovereign, because the House had fought for several centuries to wrest from the crowned head of the state the power to rule the country in order to put it in the hands of the elected representatives of the people. It was indeed a dangerous office, requiring an exemplary courage and strength of conviction of those elected to it.

That is why we are electing a Speaker today. According to our tradition, he is supposed to resist the appointment and be accompanied to the Speaker's chair. This reminds us all that our government is a democratic one, that democracy has evolved over many centuries and that each and every one of us must do his or her utmost to protect our democratic rights and privileges.

• (1100)

[*English*]

The Speaker, sir, is the custodian of the privileges, rights, and the honour of the House of Commons, for he presides over the debates of the House and enforces the observance of all of the rules for preserving order in its proceedings. He is the representative of the House in its relations with the Crown, the Senate and other authorities and persons outside Parliament.

The Speaker has to be many things. He must be rigorously and scrupulously impartial in his deliberations. He is the servant of the whole House, not just a particular party. He must have a thorough knowledge of the rules, orders and precedents which guide our proceedings. Since, in the heat of debate, we are sometimes fractious, he must be firm, wise and able judiciously to settle our differences.

I am sure the members of this House will agree that Mr. James Jerome has displayed all of these qualities since he was