

*Election of Speaker*

I therefore have the honour to move, seconded by Mr. Robb:

That the Honourable Rodolphe Lemieux, member for the electoral district of Gaspé, do take the chair of this House as Speaker.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Beauchesne, the first duty of the House has not historically been one which has generated any discussion or any controversy. I do not recall that in the history of this parliament there has ever been a challenge of the choice for the position of Speaker. The nomination this afternoon is of course made in the same manner as has been our custom, by a member of the administration (Mr. Lapointe) who, in making it, speaks as a member for a constituency of this country and not as a member of the government. Parenthetically, I might say he could not speak as a member of the government, were that his duty, because there is no government. As yet, however, we sit in the House all as equals, and our duty is to take that step in organization constituted by the election of a Speaker. With what the hon. member has said as to the qualifications of the late Speaker of the House (Mr. Lemieux) I am in the fullest accord. Very gladly I testify to his impartiality, his dignity and his accomplishments in the exercise of the high functions of Speaker.

Reference has been made to this being a step towards the adoption in our country of what has been the practice in the Old Land—the permanency of a Speaker once elected through succeeding parliaments and through succeeding governments. I do not know that the occasion calls for comment on such practice. It is always referred to when a Speaker is elected, and never has been followed before in any emphatic sense; and though it is the desire of hon. gentlemen opposite that at this time it be followed, I am afraid I must say that I will have more confidence in their fidelity to the practice when it is put into effect in the case of a Speaker who has been first selected by the other side of the House. Nothing now would be appropriate, save to express, so far as I am concerned individually—and I think I may say for those who are around me—entire satisfaction with the work already done as our presiding officer by the distinguished member for Gaspé, and to assure him that in the exercise of his duty in the forthcoming parliament, be it short or long, he will receive from us the same courtesy, the same fairness and deference to his high post, which he received in the last. Mention has been made that the duties of the Speaker in the late House were arduous. These duties are always arduous, and were no less so in the last House than on other occasions—but

[Mr. Lapointe.]

only because of the close attention necessary to long and sometimes wearisome debates. I am sure all members of the House will concur when I say that in so far as these duties could be made less onerous, they were made so by members of all parties in the last parliament. No difficulty was placed in the way of the Speaker, and that character and level of dignity it is our purpose to preserve in this parliament as well.

Mr. ROBERT FORKE (Brandon): Perhaps I may be permitted to say a few words in reference to what has been said regarding the services rendered to this House by the distinguished member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux). I am happy to have this opportunity of testifying to my appreciation—and I am sure I speak as well for those by whom I am surrounded—of the dignity and unflinching courtesy with which he has filled the office of Speaker. I am sure all those who were in the last parliament will be able to testify to his absolute impartiality and to the fairness of all his rulings and decisions. I do not intend to discuss at any length the matter of electing a Speaker permanently. I am sure if we had speakers such as the hon. member for Gaspé we should be very loath to make any change at the beginning of a new parliament. I am perfectly sure that, if we have the hon. member for Gaspé in the chair during the meetings of this parliament, all the decisions rendered will be characterized by justice and fair dealing. Coming to the last parliament as a stranger, I was impressed most strongly by the dignity of the Speaker in the House, and I carried home with me a great admiration for His Honour. I am glad indeed to support this resolution.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN (South York): As one of the senior members of the House, I desire to add to what has already been said by hon. members who have pointed out that the late Speaker of the House, the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux), does possess in a marked degree the first requisite of a good Speaker, namely, a knowledge of the rules and practices of the House. That is a good thing for him and for us. But he has other high qualities which peculiarly fit him for the office of Speaker. In the first place, he keeps a check on himself as Speaker; he holds the Speaker of the House to the rules of the House as well as I have ever seen it done, and I have seen a good many Speakers. He also has the quality of fairness, which is another essential. He has respect for the dignity of the office, and he forces every member in this Chamber to maintain the dignity of the House and the dignity of parliament.