

Election of Speaker

Minister of today has often spoken in favour of this, and I would have thought this would be an occasion when he would have been able, in his position of responsibility, to give his views thereon. In point of fact it has been debated recently in the British House of Commons, the mother of parliaments. There, on April 23, a bill came before the house which would have provided for the setting up of a special constituency known as the electoral district of St. Stephen.

It is of interest that a similar view has been expressed in our parliament. In the course of the debate, limited as it was, it was pointed out that it is better to have a permanent Speaker who is a member of the House of Commons, rather than one set apart through a medium other than election. In other words, the first commoner should be one of us, and I would hope that we, in the days ahead, will be able, in the setting up of the Speaker's committee, to deal with this question in order to assure that we in our country, recognizing the constitution as it is and the inherent bilingualism of our country, will be able to achieve the strength and authority that comes from permanence of this office.

Now, speaking of the nominee may I say this. The Prime Minister referred to the fact that Mr. Macnaughton had been chairman of the public accounts committee. That was a step we took in order to make that body effective, strong and efficient. He discharged his responsibilities there with ability, capacity and impartiality.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mention was made of the fact that he was raised in Ontario and had gone to Quebec. There are other instances among the members of this house in which that has been an effective result. I congratulate the Prime Minister upon his nomination of Mr. Macnaughton, and in a spirit of co-operation which I hope will be effective in all parts of this house we will endeavour to do our part, if he is chosen, to make him the great Speaker for which his experience as chairman of that committee indicates he has the talents and capacity.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Monsieur Raymond, it would be repetitious to again go over the importance which the position of Speaker holds in this House of Commons and the necessity of having in this position a man who can, in fairness, chair the proceedings of the house and give the stability which only the Speaker can give the house. We do agree with the remarks which have been made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and by the leader of the official opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) in this regard.

I believe it is our responsibility to consider carefully during the days ahead—and I believe this responsibility falls particularly on the Prime Minister—those reforms which will make the position of Speaker permanent in our midst. It is not an easy task that we are asking the hon. member for Mount Royal to perform, if we give our approval, which I trust we will. It would add much to the efficient carrying out of his responsibilities if he were to have the permanence about which the Leader of the Opposition has just spoken.

I trust that the Prime Minister will have more success in the months ahead in establishing the permanency of the Speaker than did the leader of the official opposition when he was prime minister. It is something that we all talk about being in agreement with, but it seems it is very difficult to produce the necessary action to bring in those reforms. We in our group are in favour of action being worked out in the necessary committee, and proposals being studied and put through to effect such a reform.

We as a group do not know Mr. Macnaughton, the hon. member for Mount Royal, so well personally, but last year we were impressed with the manner in which he carried out his responsibilities as chairman of the public accounts committee. If he carries that same ability and fairness into this position, I am sure he will prove himself an able Speaker of this house, if he is given our confidence. For our group it is with a great deal of pleasure that I state we will give our support to his nomination. Certainly the country needs a responsible attitude in this House of Commons toward the needs of our country, and this is a very good way in which it can begin.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Raymond, the New Democratic party members of this house are happy to support the motion which has been moved by the Prime Minister.

We feel that the nominee, Mr. Macnaughton, the member of parliament for Mount Royal, is eminently suited to occupy this high post. In spite of the unanimity which has greeted his nomination we shall witness in a few moments the hon. gentleman having to be dragged to the Speaker's chair. This is part of a long tradition by which members always express great reluctance to occupy this post. This was understandable in days gone by, when it meant the possible loss of your head by an irate monarch, but I am sure that even now the reluctance is not completely feigned. To leave the floor of the House of Commons and accept this exalted position does imply some hardship and some surrender of the things one would like to do, for