

qualified for the position of Speaker of this House.

I desire to comment, however, on one aspect of the situation. The choice of Speaker is the choice of this House. The House chooses and elects its Speaker; he is in no sense the choice of the Government—in no sense the choice of the Prime Minister. In the British House this has been the practice since the earliest times; we have followed that custom in equal degree and with equal fidelity. Indeed, in the British Parliament it has never been the practice even for a member of the Government to move or second the selection of a Speaker; that is left to the private members. In our Parliament we have not in that special regard followed the British practice. No one would deny that a member acceptable to the Administration should be selected; but I do deny the right of the Administration—the right of the Prime Minister—to announce to this House and to the country in advance whom we shall select as Speaker. I know of no instance where that has been done in our previous history. But, when the present Government was chosen, when after long and laborious incubation the names came to the light of day, the Prime Minister issued a statement on December 30 last, in which he announced that the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux would be selected as Speaker of the House of Commons. That was assuming a function not his own, a function in no way appertaining to the Government. It was his function to choose his ministers; it was not his function to choose or announce a Speaker. Indeed, it was no less than a discourtesy to this House to say in advance whom we should select as our Speaker.

That is in no way meant in disparagement of the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux). I do not suppose he was a party to the announcement. I believe his knowledge of our traditions is such that he would not be a party to such an announcement; and I join in every word of commendation of him in so far as his personal qualifications go. But I do not want those words to be understood as exculpating him from the penalty which he must pay for some of the speeches he made in his own province in order to secure the result which took place there on December 6. This, however, is not the appropriate place to refer in terms of controversy to those speeches. It would be most inappropriate were I now to even

make mention of discussions of legitimate topics, though I might differ, and wholly differ, from assertions contained therein though made as assertions of fact. But certain lines of discussion may be indulged in in this country which are beyond the pale of political propriety, because if the example were followed by others it would be incompatible with our national life. In such unwarranted discussion the hon. member for Gaspé undoubtedly indulged.

Reference was made by the Prime Minister to the fact that only two other hon. members, elected as far back as 1896, sit among us to-day. My attention had not been previously drawn to the realization of that sad truth. It illustrates the uncertainty of human life—and it illustrates as well the mortality of political existence.

When reference was being made to the qualifications of the hon. member for Gaspé, and when claim to fidelity to parliamentary practice was being made on the part of the Prime Minister, I could not help but think that one custom which we have followed for many years, if not back to Confederation, has been disregarded in this instance. It has been the practice to promote him who has occupied the post of Deputy Speaker, if he is so fortunate as to be returned, to the position of Speaker in the succeeding Parliament. That was followed in the case of one hon. gentleman still a member of this House whom we are glad to see among us, representing, I presume, his former constituency, the hon. member for Bonaventure (Mr. Maréchal). That was also the case in respect to the Hon. Louis Philippe Brodeur, who, having been Deputy Speaker for some years, succeeded in 1904 to the position of Speaker. It was followed in the case of the Hon. Albert Seigney, who, having been Deputy Speaker, succeeded the Hon. T. S. Sproule as Speaker in 1917, and it was followed in the case of the late Speaker, Mr. Rhodes. That it has not been followed in the present instance cannot be attributed to lack of qualification on the part of the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Boivin). I doubt if this House has ever been favoured with a deputy speaker who possessed greater qualifications for the duties of the office and who in their discharge met in higher degree the favour of all sides of this House. In the course of the exercise of his duties he manifested that diligence and strength of character, that stern impartiality and