

After Recess

The House resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. R. L. BAKER (Toronto Northeast) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, may I, with your kind permission, address the House on the subject of this debate, it being the first occasion I have of speaking in this Assembly, I ask for your leniency and that of the House. But before broaching the subject matter, Sir, I wish to pay you my respects and offer you my congratulations on the high post you occupy as First Commoner of Canada. I also wish to congratulate the hon. members of this House on their selection of a man so dignified, courteous, capable and possessing such a sense of fairness, as Speaker of this House for a second term. I hope that you will live long as occupant of that position; but, that before long, the hon. gentlemen on this side will be sitting on the other side of the House, on your right, and those hon. gentlemen now on the other side will be here, on your left. I further wish, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, to offer you and the hon. members of this House our congratulations.

It is a pleasure for me to endeavour for a few moments to speak the French language, out of regard for you, Sir, and those other French Canadian members in this House, and further, because as the hon. member for Laval-Two Mountains (Mr. Lacombe) expressed it, there are two official languages in this country. I endorse what the hon. member said: That French is the most beautiful language born on human lips. I should like to speak more at length in French, however I do not wish to do so to-day, because I am sorry to admit it, I have forgotten much of my French, not having had enough practice within the last thirty years and I naturally fear not to be well understood. However, I trust that, when I have been living here for a year, I shall be more successful and that some day I shall have the pleasure of delivering in the House, a speech in French. The French Canadian members in this House understand the two official languages of this country, but all the English speaking members do not, perhaps, understand the two languages; that is why, Sir, with your kind permission I shall now continue in English. But before I do so, I wish to express a wish: I think it is necessary to have in this city a French speaking club to study and converse in French. I propose that the name "Le Club Lemieux" be given to it, and I would like to have the honour of being a member of this club so as to endeavour to speak the French

language perfectly, and this, for me, would require a long practice. I also endorse the views of the hon. member for Bonaventure (Mr. Marcell), when he says that it is an excellent thing to speak two or three languages. In view of the fact, Mr. Speaker, as I previously pointed out, that this is the first occasion on which I have had the honour of addressing this or any other parliament, I know you will extend to me the same generous, kind consideration that you have always shown to those who are making their first speech in this House. I trust that hon. members will bear patiently with me while I express my views on the question before the House, to do which, I understand, is my privilege, as well as my duty, as I see it, to my constituents.

I wish to refer to two occasions upon which remarks made by me were referred to in this House. The first occasion was when the hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), acting as leader of the House—which duties he performed so well—said that one of the members from Toronto, addressing his constituents, "made the following remarks" to which he took exception. In order that the onus shall not be placed on any of the other Toronto members—I presume they have enough troubles of their own to bear—I think it will be well for me to state that I did make the remarks in question to my constituents before coming to the House. I said at that time that I considered it was inconsistent for the Progressives to vote, because, as I explained to my constituents, they dissented from both the other parties in the House; that the people of the districts which they represent also dissented from the two old parties, and therefore to be consistent they ought not to vote in the original division in the House which sought to determine who had the right to govern the country. I have nothing to withdraw regarding that statement, and although it seemed to annoy some people I thought it expressed my conviction as to what should be the correct course on the part of the Progressives. I still think that if they had followed that course they would have taken the right stand, and by abstaining from voting at that time the business of the House would be further advanced than it is to-day, and they themselves would not have made any less progress than they have to date. I do not feel called upon to withdraw the statement I made at that time, although it seemed to annoy a few hon. members of this House. I am still of the opinion that had the course which I outlined been followed, it would have been the best policy to adopt, having regard to the welfare