

*Election of Speaker*

many virtues to be sought in one man; I believe they are all possessed by the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux).

The hon. Mr. Lemieux has been a member of the House of Commons of Canada continuously for over a quarter of a century. If we except the hon. member for South York (Mr. Maclean), who entered Parliament in 1892, and the hon. member for Laval-Two Mountains (Mr. Ethier), who was also returned at the general elections of 1896, I think I am right in saying that this is a distinction not enjoyed by any other hon. member of this House as to-day composed. Seniority of itself does not always constitute a claim for recognition or preferment. Where, however, as in the case of the hon. member for Gaspé, it is combined with exceptional endowments and distinguished service, it becomes a first consideration.

It has been more or less a tradition in this House that in successive parliaments the speakers should be chosen alternately from representatives of English and French origin. In the last Parliament, the Speaker was of English descent. It is fitting, therefore, that on this occasion we should select as Speaker one whose ancestry links him with the great race who were the pioneers of early discovery and settlement in what is now our Canadian Dominion.

In this our practice has differed in an essential particular from that followed in the British House of Commons, where the Speaker, once elected, is honoured by being re-elected to the Chair at the beginning of every new Parliament, so long as he remains a member of the House of Commons. I think we would do well to consider carefully the obvious merit of the British practice. It has been established as the outcome of long years of parliamentary experience, and its advantages in many particulars are apparent. This, however, is a matter which the House must decide for itself, and which cannot be determined except by the decision of successive parliaments. For the present we will not err if we hold to the custom we have thus far followed.

Whilst there may be reasons why, on occasions, we should keep in mind differences which owe their origin to circumstances wholly beyond our own control, it is an infinitely finer conception of public duty which causes us to place the emphasis, in our national affairs, not on what we have of difference, but on what we hold in common; in other words, on what as Cana-

dians we share of which we may be justly proud. May I remind hon. members, in this connection, that few public men in our history have served their country with rarer fidelity, with more distinction, or at greater sacrifice, than the hon. member for Gaspé. Whether it has been as an able parliamentarian upholding British traditions on the floor of this House, or as an administrator of important departments of the Government, or as our country's representative on ceremonial and diplomatic missions in different parts of the world, Mr. Lemieux at all times has fulfilled the trust reposed in him with credit to his fellow-countrymen and honour to himself. His only son, to whom with parental pride he had looked to bear his name in like distinction of public service, lies among the number of the immortal youth of our land whose lives were given in the cause of the world's freedom.

Where death has placed its hand, we cannot enter. At best we can do scant justice to public sacrifice of any kind; but we can cherish what we hold in remembrance of patriotic service alike of the living and the dead; and it is therefore with feelings of gratitude and pride that I move, seconded by Mr. Fielding:

The Honourable Rodolphe Lemieux, K.C., LL.D., member representing the electoral district of Gaspé, do take the chair of this House as Speaker.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): The duties of Speaker have been well and, indeed, very gracefully defined by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), who makes this motion. The qualifications of the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux) for this high office have also been well and amply defined by my hon. friend, and in his statement of those qualifications I desire to concur, rather than to differ. I rise not at all to make criticism of the choice of the Prime Minister, as a member of this House, of the hon. member for Gaspé as Speaker of the Fourteenth Parliament. Indeed, the Hon. Mr. Lemieux, associated as he has been with the House of Commons now for some twenty-five years, through most of that time in a position of high responsibility, always in a position of keen activity, and displaying throughout the entire period a marked knowledge of the history of our own land and of the Motherland, and particularly of parliamentary practice and of constitutional government, is, in point of experience and learning, undoubtedly amply

[Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King.]