

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): I do not blame my right hon. friend for having sent that wire; and surely the member for Charlevoix-Saguenay paid him only a very ordinary courtesy in putting on a list the name of the lady recommended by my right hon. friend. And though Mr. Casgrain was not Speaker at the time, it was appropriate that he should do so, in the case of that person, as with respect to all those who were recommended by other members of the house. I think it is but a tempest in a teapot.

As regards employees, sessional or otherwise, who may have received or may receive notice that their services will not be required in the future, may I say that personally I do not favour dismissals, and it is always a difficult thing to do. But in some instances—and it has happened to my own knowledge in my department and in my own city of Quebec—where men were dismissed three or four years ago merely on political grounds, and have been waiting for four years to get common justice and to be reinstated in their positions, I say that I will recommend such men. It is also to my knowledge, Mr. Beaudesne, that most frequently the people who are louder than others in the bitterness of their complaints are men who were instrumental two or three years ago in having some people dismissed so that they might get their jobs.

I believe that when the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay is regularly appointed Speaker of the House of Commons, as he will be in a few minutes, he will certainly exercise all the impartiality, the discretion and the tact which is necessary for the fulfilment of the duties of his office in the supervision of the staff of the house as well as in the observance of the rules.

Mr. J. S. WOODSWORTH (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Beaudesne, much as I regret having to do so, I feel that in this matter I must associate myself with the protest of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett). I do so in the full recognition of the fact that the little group I have associated with me, not having occupied office, cannot be charged with anything like a similar offence in the past.

I rather regret that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) with his great legal acumen, should have tried to make light of the charges which have been brought forward by the leader of the opposition, and has entirely evaded the issue. The matter is not one of temporary employees; the matter is one of permanent employees. Further than that, the minister would try to make out that the dismissal was for cause. I ask, why whole-

sale notices of dismissal? Moreover, if there was real cause for dismissal, why were these notices countermanded? That is an important question.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) emphasized the fact, at the beginning of his speech, that the choice of Speaker was the choice of the House of Commons. I think perhaps the position taken by the Minister of Justice, in view of that statement, was hardly a worthy one, that the choice of the government was to be pushed through at whatever cost and under any circumstances at all. The fact that the Prime Minister suggests that the choice is the choice of the commons implies that we are under a certain obligation and should have some voice at this time as to whether or not we consider the nominee suitable. If we pass this matter over in silence, then undoubtedly we shall be regarded by the general public as condoning something which has shocked the people of Canada.

There is no doubt whatever that Mr. Casgrain has many of the qualities which would admirably fit him for the position of Speaker. He knows the rules, that is quite true, or he should after all these years. He undoubtedly is a bilingualist and, I agree, that is an immense asset for the office he is to fill. I am not quite so sure, however, that the fact that he is a lawyer is an outstanding qualification. Some of us who are not lawyers sometimes wish that we had in the chair someone who does not belong to that profession. However, we admit many of his qualifications.

The Prime Minister went on to say that the occupant of the office must have fairness and impartiality, that he must be a protector of the rights of individual members. Further than that, he must leave partisanship behind him. Judged by the very criteria laid down by the Prime Minister I am not at all sure that the nominee possesses these qualifications. In this matter at least he has not shown fairness and impartiality; he has not been the protector of certain rights of some members of the staff of this house, and certainly he has not given any indication that he is leaving behind him a partisan spirit. I recognize that it may be extremely difficult for a man to resign the post of chief whip of a party and at one jump accept the more or less judicial position of Speaker of this house. But in any case I think we should have a statement from the Prime Minister dealing with the actual occurrences of the last week or two, and further we should have the assurance of the Prime Minister himself that no such action as this will be tolerated in the future.