

appearance of the matter and perhaps that is where the debate ought to focus.

I would argue that in accepting the co-chairmanship of a leadership convention of a national political party, far from displaying partisanship or partisan activity, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot would be called upon to preside in a parliamentary role over the proceedings of the national convention. Her rich experience of presiding in this distinguished chair could in fact reflect positively on that activity.

There are two co-chairs in this particular proceeding. One is a retired former premier and distinguished Canadian statesman of my own province. No one I think would even accuse that individual of using the co-chairmanship of this leadership convention for partisan aims.

• (1120)

I submit that what the hon. Deputy Speaker would be contributing to in this activity would be to the parliamentary proceedings of a party event. I would submit that she will, as all of us would expect, conduct herself in such a way that her behaviour and comportment would only enhance the dignity and impartiality of the activities that she is called upon to perform in her duties as Deputy Speaker.

My hon. friend has mentioned that the Deputy Speaker is a member of the Board of Internal Economy. I cannot see the relevance of that point to the argument before us.

In conclusion, the citations which my hon. friend used go a long way toward supporting my side of the argument rather than his. I believe the House ought to find, and you, Sir, of course will be the judge of that, that this particular hon. member is proposed to accept an honour from her party that recognizes her impartiality and her fairness, in a party context in this instance, as she has demonstrated among all the parties here in the House.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I think it is really unfortunate that we need to have this kind of discussion in this House today. To use the words of the hon. member who spoke before me, no one questions the Deputy Speaker's performance in this House. I think that is a fair assessment. I do not think any of us are questioning her impartiality or abilities in the House.

To use the analogy that the other co-chair of the Conservative convention is going to be a retired premier

Privilege

and no one is suggesting that he would be using the convention for partisan reasons is quite different from having a sitting Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, who is not retired, as the co-chair. Surely from among the ranks of the Conservative Party there could be found a woman to be the co-chair whose ability and prestige matches that of the Deputy Speaker and who would not raise the questions that are being raised here today.

Mr. Speaker, I recall the great lengths that you went to during the pre-election period and election campaign during the 1988 election to ensure that in your role as Speaker you maintained the impartiality, the non-partisan role required, probably far beyond anybody's expectations. I think people respected you for that imagery of impartiality. Everyone knew that you came from a political party but everybody respected the fact that you campaigned in the impartial way you did.

We are not only talking about the rules of impartiality but about the appearance of impartiality. The role of the Deputy Speaker in the House after fulfilling this role for the Conservative Party would be made very difficult. When she returns then the question of impartiality becomes a much greater question after people have witnessed her leading a convention for the Conservative Party.

While we have a great deal of respect for the Deputy Speaker, I would hope that she would do something to eliminate the possibility that she would be put in a position that would create suspicion about her impartiality.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I have five brief points. My first point is that I said very clearly that I was not questioning the performance of the Deputy Speaker in debate or during Question Period, not at all. The key issue, which the chief government Whip has failed to recognize, is that we are talking about the office of the Speaker, the office of the Deputy Speaker of this Parliament, which is essential to the impartiality of the proceedings which follow.

• (1125)

Second, with regard to the Deputy Speaker sitting on the Board of Internal Economy, I raised that issue so that members opposite would understand that appointment, that position is there to represent the entire House and not one political party.