

without any qualification whatever, in the motion for the re-election of Mr. Lemieux to the position of Speaker.

It was stated a few moments ago with a good deal of force that the practice in Canada with regard to the Speakership has been to alternate between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. I would direct attention to the fact that after confederation Mr. Cockburn was nominated by Sir John A. Macdonald and was the first Speaker of the Canadian parliament. After the general election of 1872 Sir John A. Macdonald again nominated the same gentleman for the position of Speaker, intending obviously to follow the British practice of retaining in that exalted and important position a Speaker whose qualifications had been proved by experience. Subsequent to that the practice of alternation came into vogue, and the whole question at issue is as to whether the British practice, illustrated in the continuous service, as Speaker, of Arthur Onslow for thirty-four years in the British House of Commons, is to prevail in Canada, or whether we are to revert to the more recent practice of alternating between English-speaking and French-speaking members of the House? Speaking for myself alone, I disparage any distinction in respect to any position in this House, between a French Canadian and an English Canadian. I believe that the man possessing the qualifications, whatever the nationality of his forebears may have been, should be chosen upon his merits. Now test the member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux) by that measure. He has presided over this House for a period of some six years, and I believe that no Speaker, in the history of the House of Commons of Canada, has ever shown more dignity and more forcefulness than the hon. member for Gaspé. Hon. members may speak of partiality and may question the impartiality of the gentleman who is placed in this exalted position, and if I may digress for a moment, I recall that Mr. Joseph H. Choate, the celebrated diplomat, in toasting the then Chancellor of England, referring to the ancient character of the office, said that the antiquity of the Chancellor was so great that the spray of the deluge was upon him. That remark might almost be applied to the Speaker. Impartial! Yes, as impartial as it is given to any human being to be. There will be a natural and inevitable bias, subconscious it is true, but I venture to say that, subject to that inevitable bias, from which no one engaged in politics can free himself, Mr. Lemieux has conducted the duties of Speaker with fairness, and I hope

[Mr. R. S. White.]

with satisfaction to all parties. Therefore I say that the partiality of the Speaker is more likely to be pronounced when he occupies that position for a term of four years only than if he were to occupy the position for a term of forty years. The longer he occupies that position, in all logic, the more detached he should become from party bias.

Therefore, speaking for myself alone, I concur in what the Prime Minister has said, and desire to express my personal gratification in the fact that the hon. member for Gaspé is to preside over the deliberations of this House.

Mr. T. L. CHURCH (Toronto Northwest): I agree with everything that has been said in reference to the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux). He has many fine qualities of head and heart and is a distinguished Canadian. He has now been nominated to preside over this chamber during the coming parliament. I may say he is a good Canadian and Britisher and is regarded in Ontario as well as in Quebec as an outstanding Canadian, and a man of the most generous qualities.

However, I wish to raise an important principle in relation to the Speaker of the House. I refer to the fact that the hon. member proposed by the right hon. Prime Minister for the position of Speaker is a shareholder and director in some of the chartered banks and insurance companies in this country, who are continually coming to this House asking for favours and for legislation.

The hon. leader of the Progressives has spoken to-day and I wish to refer to remarks he has made. At a meeting of the directors of the Bank of Montreal on December 8, the great and distinguished Canadian now nominated for the position of Speaker referred to that institution as the cornerstone of our national credit and security. That may or may not be so. I might say to the Progressive members that we had a cabinet minister in this House and a former leader of the Progressives (Mr. Crerar) who looked upon the Home Bank of which he was a director, as the cornerstone of our national credit and security and the bank failed and ruined thousands. I find the hon. member now nominated is a director of the Montreal City Bank, a director of the National Life Insurance Company and a shareholder of the Bank of Montreal and some other chartered corporations in the country. I wish to utter my protest because I believe the day is coming in this country when we should regard our Speaker's chair as the most important office we have in the government of Canada. Giving due consideration to the importance of the