

Election of Speaker

have had Speakers who have worthily upheld the finest traditions of our British parliamentary system.

In the years since Mr. Michener was first elected to this house he has been, as those of us who were here then were able to observe, diligent in his attendance and scrupulous in his observance of the rules of the house and all its ancient usages. His background, which has been referred to in such fitting terms by the Prime Minister, his record as a member, and what we know of him as a man will, I feel, all commend themselves to us as good auguries for the future.

In the confident expectation—and I stress those words—that the house will be well served by Mr. Michener as its Speaker and that he will preside over us competently and with dignity and impartiality, I am happy to second the Prime Minister's motion.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Raymond, as is customary at this time I join with the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. St. Laurent) in supporting the nomination of a new Speaker for this parliament. The Prime Minister expressed to the house and indeed to the country what are the functions of the Speaker in this parliament and in the parliaments like it throughout the commonwealth. I noted that he stated that one of the functions of the Speaker was to see that every individual member was properly protected and properly treated in this house.

May I say that I regard one of the principal functions of the Speaker to be not only to protect the individual rights of each member of this house, but to protect groups who may be in minority positions. As a matter of fact, throughout the long period of British history when, as has been indicated, the Speaker occupied a position not only of some responsibility but of some danger, that function on occasion has been the primary function of the Speaker of the day.

I am reminded, as I often am, of one of the greatest Speakers of the British parliament, namely Mr. Speaker Lenthall. I recall again today, as I have done on former occasions, that when Charles I came to the House of Commons in 1642 and demanded that he have the right to arrest five members who had displeased him, it was Lenthall who turned to the king and said:

I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak, in this place but as the house is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here.

Thus the Speaker established his position as the protector of the rights of a small minority. In this chamber today there is a house much different from any in which I have had the privilege of sitting, for this is my sixth

parliament since 1935. There are not majorities in this house; there are a number of minorities.

Consequently the Speaker will have a particular function to fulfil, and I believe that in Mr. Michener we shall have a Speaker who will try to carry out his responsibilities impartially and give the minorities in this house, whether large or small, the proper consideration and protection they deserve.

The Prime Minister said the Speaker would occupy the chair. The Speaker of the House of Commons is, of course, no mere chairman elected for the supervision of debates. He is the champion of the legislature, against whom? Against the executive. I would remind the government—the executive—of that important function of the Speaker, to protect the house against the executive. The Speaker is custodian of the rights and the privileges that have been handed down to us through a very long period of history and of struggle. Indeed, as the first commoner he is a principal part of the very constitution under which we live and in a very peculiar way which we are recognizing today when Her Majesty the Queen opens this parliament.

So I rise to join with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in supporting the election of Mr. Michener as Speaker of this parliament, and to assure him that we shall give him all the co-operation we can. I believe and I pray that his period as Speaker may be a very distinguished one and that he may function according to the historic precedents which have been so well laid down from time to time in the mother of parliaments as well as this younger institution of our own.

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Raymond, I rise at this time to indicate to you and to the hon. members of this house that the Social Credit party feel that Mr. Roland Michener is a fit and proper person to assume the office of Speaker and the position of first commoner. We have confidence in Mr. Michener that has been born of our close association with him for some years.

When the Prime Minister outlined to the house the background of Mr. Michener's experience which fitted him to assume this very high and important office, he told the house that Mr. Michener was born in Alberta. We think that was the most important thing which fitted him to be the first commoner and the Speaker of the House of Commons.

We realize that the new Speaker, when he is elected, will have a more difficult time, perhaps, than other Speakers have had for some years because of the very fact, as