

Speaker, one of the younger members of this house, fluent in both languages, has, by his record as a presiding officer, shown not only alertness and capacity but a sense of fairness and impartiality in keeping with the high office which is his. I would ask the hon. gentleman who has made this motion, and who has supported the substance of the motion presented by the Prime Minister, although, as is his right, he has objected to the procedures involved, in the light of the vital circumstances that confronted not only the government, not only every member of this house, but members of the United Nations who are anxious to prevent a threat to peace, to recognize, in the goodness of his heart and judgment, that he does not serve the cause of parliament well when he seeks to condemn the presiding officer of this house. The Deputy Speaker courageously and efficiently dealt with a situation which resulted in parliament having one of its noblest days on Friday last.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Gregoire) correctly referred to the motion that he has presented as dealing with a very serious matter. In fact, in the institution of parliament nothing could be more serious than a questioning of the integrity of a presiding officer. I am sure the hon. member for Lapointe realizes that if this motion were to carry, the hon. member for Stormont (Mr. Lamoureux) would have no alternative but to resign his position as Deputy Speaker. I am sure the hon. member for Lapointe realizes that if, in fact, the motion were defeated on a vote but a substantial number of members voted for it, the Deputy Speaker would be in the same position. For reasons I shall give, I hope that at the end of the debate he will consider asking the unanimous consent of the house to withdraw the motion.

Mr. Speaker, it may seem a bit unfair that one person should be in the position where, through making one mistake, he should have to suffer the kind of consequence that would follow from the passing of this motion. That, of course, is simply an indication of the exalted nature of the position held by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is a position that does require the utmost impartiality, the highest integrity; and those who accept this position recognize that fact. But I think the hon. member for Lapointe, and all of us, have to consider very seriously whether the question that has been put before us is of the kind that should lead the house, should lead even a few members of the house, to call in question the integrity of a presiding officer.

20220—77½

Non-Confidence in Deputy Speaker

It has been the practice this afternoon—and it is not unique in parliament—for members to stand and place the blame somewhere else. I am going to do something different; I am going to break one of the rules of political life, which is that a politician is never supposed to admit that he made a mistake. I want to say that I share the blame for what happened on Friday night, and I refuse to stand here and put the blame on the hon. member for Stormont; I refuse to put all the blame on the government; I refuse to put all the blame on everybody else. I share in that blame.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: If a mistake was made Friday night—and I believe that a mistake or two was made—we all made it, including the member for Winnipeg North Centre, including the members of my hon. friend's group, ten of whom were not even here—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: —despite standing order 5, which says:

Every member is bound to attend the service of the house, unless leave of absence has been given him by the house.

We are all in this, and I suggest that the only answer—

Mr. Gregoire: I suppose, Mr. Speaker, in view of what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is saying, at the end of this debate we will be responsible for what happened. I should like to point out what I pointed out in my remarks earlier, that unanimous consent had been asked for in the middle of the afternoon and was refused; so everyone in our party was entitled to think there would be no sitting on Friday night. Also, about 150 members were missing from the house on Friday night.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I understand that under the rules the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Gregoire) will have the privilege of replying later.

Mr. Knowles: I suggest, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the point we have just been discussing between the two of us, that one cannot argue with the words of standing order 5, and members who have not been given leave of absence by the house have no right to complain about what happened—

Mr. Gregoire: Where is the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson)?

Mr. Knowles: They cannot complain about what happened in their absence, which is what the members of that group are doing.

Mr. Gregoire: Where is the Prime Minister?