

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Wednesday, March 8, 1922.

This being the day on which Parliament is convoked by proclamation of the Governor General for the despatch of business, and the members of the House being assembled:

William B. Northrup, Esquire, M.A., K.C., the Clerk of the House, read the House a letter from the Governor General's Secretary, informing him that the Chief Justice of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, would proceed to the Senate Chamber on Wednesday, the 8th of March, at 3 p.m., to open the session.

A message was delivered by Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod:—

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

His Honour the Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this Honourable House in the Chamber of the Honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the House went up to the Senate Chamber, when the Speaker of the Senate said:—

Honourable Gentlemen of the Senate:

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

I have it in command to let you know that His Excellency the Governor General does not see fit to declare the causes of his summoning the present Parliament of Canada until the Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen according to law; but to-morrow, at the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon, His Excellency will declare the causes of calling this Parliament.

And the members being returned to the Commons Chamber:

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Northrup, we are assembled as members of the House of Commons, in virtue of a royal proclamation summoning the Fourteenth Parliament of Canada. We have just been reminded by the representative of the Crown that, with the commencement of a new Parliament, our first duty is to elect a Speaker. This obligation

is in accordance with long established usage of Parliament. It comes down to us as a part of our inheritance of British Parliamentary institutions. It links our political liberties with those of ancient origin.

I need not remind the hon. members of the dignity and importance of the office of Speaker of the House of Commons. If I do so at all, it is because the gentleman whom I am about to propose and to ask hon. members to elect, possesses in such marked degree the qualities expected of the "First Commoner", that a mention of some of these requirements may serve to arouse a consciousness not less of the extent of our opportunity and obligation than of his merit.

I suppose the most venerable of the duties of the Speaker is that of being the channel of communication between the Commons and the Crown. There was a time when the discharge of this duty demanded not less of courage than of courtesy; to-day it has become the least arduous of all the Speaker's obligations. The relations between the Crown and the people were never happier than they are to-day, whether this be said of His Majesty the King and British citizens throughout the globe, or of His Majesty's representative in Canada and the representatives of the Canadian people here assembled. The adequate discharge of this honourable duty need cause us little concern.

It is as presiding officer of this House, and the custodian of its honour and rights and privileges, that the office of Speaker places upon its incumbent obligations and responsibilities of the highest order; and demands of him the noblest qualities of intellect, of temperament, and of heart. He must have a thorough knowledge and wide experience of the rules and procedure of the House. He must be possessed of calm judgment and of quick decision; he must combine firmness with impartiality and patience; and he should have, withal, a generous disposition and a goodly understanding of human nature. These are