

*Election of Speaker*

what has been said to the effect that the choice is in the hands of the house, the fact remains that when the Prime Minister stands to vote, the house will take the view that they will condone this conduct and support the election of Mr. Casgrain to the chair. Although the votes against it may be few, nevertheless I think that if you had the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier here, if you had any of the great champions of the privileges and traditions of parliament here, you would not have this situation. We cannot stultify ourselves; we cannot condone conduct such as this, and make a precedent that will ring down through the years. No matter how difficult it may be, no matter how unfortunate and how unhappy it may be, we have to take this position. Sir, we cannot support the motion that has been made.

Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Minister of Justice): Mr. Beauchesne, I am sorry I have to crave the indulgence of the house for the purpose of saying two or three words in answer to the right hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat (Mr. Bennett). It is not customary to hold a debate on an occasion such as this. In fact, it is not appropriate that there should be a debate, but I feel that part of what the right hon. gentleman has said must not be left unanswered. With the first part of his remarks I am heartily in agreement. Indeed I was pleasantly surprised to hear my right hon. friend say that this House of Commons was not an appendage of any government. When we on this side were occupying the seats now occupied by the friends of the right hon. gentleman we tried to teach that, and I am glad that he has carried his lesson over with him to the other side.

It is my privilege to have been in this House of Commons for thirty-two years. Today I begin the first session of my tenth parliament. I have had some experience in what has transpired every time there has been a change of administration, and on almost every occasion complaints have been made. These complaints have not always been made on the floor of the house because some leaders of the opposition thought it better not to do so. However, complaints have been made on almost every occasion. I remember the old parliament building where the Speaker had an apartment in which he lived with his family, and I can remember an hon. member who was to be nominated as speaker coming and installing himself and his family in the apartment in the House of Commons before he was elected. We criticized this at the time, but our leader did not think it would be a good thing to raise the matter in parliament.

[Mr. Bennett.]

I think, sir, that confusion always arises owing to the fact that there is not a Speaker to look after the work that must be organized for a session. Many of the employees are purely sessional; they are temporary and have to be summoned to come to work for the ensuing session.

Mr. BENNETT: I made no comment upon that.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): They are not permanent employees, and somebody has to look after that part of the work. In theory, my right hon. friend is right; the Speaker to be elected has no authority until he is elected. But in practice it has always been done in this way, to my own knowledge.

Mr. BENNETT: Permanent employees?

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): I mean sessional employees.

Mr. BENNETT: That is another thing.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): I mean the organization of the work of the session by a staff—

Mr. BENNETT: I admitted that.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): —to be appointed.

Mr. BENNETT: I admitted that.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): Of course, the Speaker to be elected is not yet appointed. But, as my right hon. friend has said, the press usually mentions his name, and when that name is the name of a man who is so well qualified as my hon. friend from Charlevoix-Saguenay (Mr. Casgrain), it is no wonder that members of parliament and other persons who have someone to recommend send in these names to the gentleman to be elected. Well, would it surprise you, Mr. Beauchesne, would it surprise the members of the house if I said that my right hon. friend himself wired the member for Charlevoix-Saguenay, recommending somebody to be appointed?

Mr. BENNETT: I had a note upon my papers to make a statement with regard to a former employee of the leader of the opposition, later employed by the Speaker of the house. I sent a telegram to Mr. Casgrain. She was to be a temporary employee, of course, on the sessional staff. I have said, and I repeat, I concede the right of Mr. Casgrain to organize the sessional staff. What I was dealing with—and I made that clear—was his dismissal of 127 persons not sessional employees.