

The speakership is an office which, as we are all aware, is invested with great importance and distinction in this country as in other countries. The duties of a Speaker and the importance of the office which he fills have been noted by all constitutional writers. He is called upon to discharge functions of the highest order, and the conduct of the business of the House depends upon the ability, the impartiality, the firmness, the courtesy and the tact with which those duties are discharged. There is a member of this House, Mr. Edgar N. Rhodes, member for Cumberland, who, although a comparatively young man, has spent nearly nine years in the service of his country in Parliament; and who, in the discharge of his duties as Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker, has, in my judgment, given evidence of the qualities to which I have alluded. Last year when I had the honour of proposing that he should be Chairman of Committees, very warm tributes were paid to him by many members of the House, and I am confident that his record in the discharge of the duties of that office was such as to show that those tributes were properly rendered. We have rules, written and unwritten, which govern the conduct of business in this House and govern also the conduct and demeanour of its members; and I would say that in this House, as in all deliberative assemblies, there is one unwritten rule which is not less important than any of those promulgated in written form; and it is this: that all the written rules of the House must be administered with fairness, with impartiality, with firmness and with tact.

I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Rhodes will discharge the duties of this office in accordance with the best traditions of the past and in accordance also with the principles to which I have alluded, principles which I am sure will be accepted by all the members of this House as proper and appropriate.

I therefore have very great pleasure in proposing, seconded by Mr. Rogers, that Mr. Edgar N. Rhodes, member of this House for the electoral district of Cumberland, be Speaker of this House.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Quebec East): Dr. Flint, on behalf of the members of this House who sit on this side, I have to declare that we will accept the nominee of the Government for the high position of Speaker of this House with very great pleasure. Indeed I am happy on this first day of this session to be able to join

[Sir Robert Borden.]

with my right hon. friend in the first motion he makes. I wish it could be so all through the session—a wish which perhaps may not be fulfilled in its entirety; but if all the motions which are to be made by my right hon. friend in this House are of the character of this one, we shall have an easy and pleasant session indeed. Mr. Rhodes has already given evidence in the capacity of Chairman of Committees that he is highly endowed for the position of the first officer of this House in character, education and judicial temperament. In fact, having been a colleague of Mr. Rhodes now for some nine years, and, if I may say so, having been a friend of his during that time, I know of no blemish in him except that he is a Tory. But it is not given to everybody to be a Grit—it is a special dispensation of Providence. At all events, even if Mr. Rhodes is a Tory at the present time, I have no doubt at all that when he ascends the steps which will lead him to that chair, he will leave his Toryism behind him, and that he will be a true, an honest, an impartial presiding officer of this House, and will administer the rules of this House, as has been said by my right hon. friend, with absolute impartiality and fairness; that he will be the arbiter between the two sides of this House, and that he will maintain the traditions of the high office to which he has been called. For my part, I offer him my congratulations upon his unanimous election to the speakership of this House.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Dr. Flint, I am very much obliged to my right hon. friend for the handsome way in which he has welcomed the first measure which I have had to propose at this session, and while, as he observes, I cannot anticipate that everything I shall propose during the session will meet with his approval, I can assure him that everything which I shall propose will be equally meritorious.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: That is boasting.

The Clerk of the House declared the motion carried in the affirmative, nemine contradicente, and Edgar N. Rhodes, Esquire, member for the electoral division of Cumberland, duly elected to the Chair of the House.

Honourable Mr. Rhodes was conducted from his seat in the House to the Speaker's Chair by Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Borden and Hon. Robert Rogers.