

*Election of Speaker*

Those were the days when the Commons faced the overwhelming sovereignty of the monarch. Because of the fact that the Commons never did sit with the crown and the Lords, the practice was, and it goes back to the fourteenth century, of having a spokesman speak on behalf of the Commons. As an example, almost 400 years ago, in 1562, Speaker Williams, during the reign of Elizabeth I, spoke on behalf of the rights of the commoners. He asked for the right of free access to the Queen. He asked for the right to interpret the wishes of the members of the House of Commons. He asked for the historic and prerogative rights of the Commons in these words:

That the assembly of the lower house may have frank and free liberties to speak their minds without any controlment, blame, grudge, menaces or displeasure, according to the old ancient order.

Finally Speaker Williams said:

...the old privilege of the house be observed, which is that they and theirs might be at liberty, frank and free, without arrest, molestation, trouble or other damage to their bodies, lands, goods or servants, with all other their liberties, during the time of the said parliament, whereby they may the better attend and do their duty; all which privileges I desire may be enrolled, as at other times it hath been accustomed.

That was under Elizabeth I. Today parliament is supreme, and the throne, while losing its apparent powers and authority, has gained in dignity and significance and in the hearts of the people, and this function is no longer one of concern.

Oliver Goldsmith, exemplifying what parliament stood for and the right of the rule of law in parliament, said:

The Englishman is taught to love the King as his friend, but to acknowledge no other master than the laws which he himself has contributed to enact.

What are the functions of the Speaker? I am not going to review what has been said in the past by my predecessors in office. Summarizing the position of the Speaker, it is this: to preside over the House of Commons, to be the jealous guardian of its prerogatives and rights, without which its prestige would suffer and ultimately freedom would be endangered. The Speaker must be impartial. He must know the rules of procedure. He should have parliamentary experience for that reason. He must exercise his office with scrupulous and rigorous impartiality. He must be firm and yet patient and incisive, courteous and ever vigilant to guard the rights and privileges of the individual member.

My predecessor in office, the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. St. Laurent), spoke of this on the last occasion a Speaker was chosen. Other prime ministers have done the same. What are the qualifications of a

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Speaker? Well, as one reads the ancient records one finds that they embody those qualities that make a Speaker almost above ordinary humanity. Lord Palmerston asked the editor of the London *Times*, "What do you require in a Speaker?" This was the reply:

Imperturbability, good temper, tact, urbanity and, if possible, a training in the law.

Mr. Raymond, in my opinion, such a man is among us in the person of Roland Michener. He was born in Alberta, where his father took part in public life, and afterwards, for many years, was a distinguished member of the Senate. Mr. Michener was a brilliant student and was awarded a Rhodes scholarship from Alberta; a queen's counsel and a member of the Middle Temple as well as the bar of Ontario, and with wide experience in government and public service as a private member of this house and as provincial secretary in Ontario; and, above everything else, whose friendships are not circumscribed by party limitations.

It may be appropriate at this time—it has been mentioned on several occasions—when we have the Queen amongst us and when our thoughts are on our traditions and history, to point out that there is a difference between our system of the choice of Speaker and that in the United Kingdom in the mother of parliaments. There it has been the custom to keep the same Speaker as long as he retains his seat in the house. The opinion has been expressed that we should have a permanent Speaker, but up to the present time the practice of Canada has not been to do so. Our practice, as constituted, is governed by the character and historic basis of our country. Under it, with few exceptions, the Speaker in one parliament is of French origin, followed in the next parliament by one of English origin. Whatever our personal views may be as to having a permanent Speaker, only parliament can make that decision and then only when there is generous unanimity in that regard.

Mr. Michener speaks French fluently. I hope he will receive the approval of the house as being a fit and proper person to be Speaker of the twenty-third parliament. Mr. Raymond, I therefore move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. St. Laurent):

That Roland Michener, Esquire, member for the electoral district of St. Paul's, do take the chair of this house as Speaker.

**Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Raymond, when the Prime Minister approached me to inquire if I would like to second his motion for the appointment of Mr. Michener as Speaker, I readily agreed to do so. I have been a member of the House of Commons since 1942, and in all the time I have been here we