

Election of Speaker

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): This is only the second time that we have elected a Speaker through the use of secret ballot in this House. You have every right to be very proud that in the last two years you have sufficiently impressed all of those of us in the last Parliament, and through what we have said to the newer Members who were just elected, with your skill, your calm and your judicious approach so as to warrant your re-election.

It is an enormous tribute to anyone to be recognized by his peers, certainly peers who have been elected by the citizens of Canada, to have been elected not once but twice. Anyone who has faced that ordeal a number of times knows that the second election is better than the first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, you have earned the respect and admiration of all your colleagues in the House. Like all Members of the House, I am sure, I too am deeply more grateful that you were re-elected quickly than you were elected for the first time in September 1986. I remember getting home just in time for breakfast. But I can say that the long hours spent electing you were worth it!

I must also thank the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) for conducting this election with distinction and poise.

For a while, he seemed to be in no hurry to give up the Chair—but anyway, he did a very good job for us all.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, you recited some of the precedents of the House and the words of distinguished Speakers of the British House of Commons and the House of Representatives. You know and we know that it is not just the mastery of the rules of this place that counts—and you, Sir, certainly have that—but it is having a sense of the House, a sense of what is needed. It is because you have that sense of the House, that sense of what is the right thing to do and when to do it, that you have merited our confidence. It is also because of your fairness, your patience, your common sense and, above all, your good humour. Your Honour will not consider this a threat in any way if I were to suggest to you that you are going to need those same qualities, and perhaps in even greater measure in this current Parliament than you exercised them in the past.

You are, Sir, above the cut and thrust of partisan politics. You are the guardian of the privileges of every single Member of this House. You are essential to the freedom of expression of the Members of this place who, after all, have been elected by Canadians.

You reflect a tradition of parliamentary democracy carried down through the centuries. As early as 1376 at Westminster the Speaker has been known as an independent representative of the commoners against the King and the nobles. As you have recalled, in early days the Speaker sometimes had a very difficult job in being the people's spokesman to the King.

The scope of your position has evolved tremendously since that day. Your role, one which you have carried out with care and skill, is not to be the servant of the King, but to be the servant of the people, and to act as an impartial referee in our proceedings.

We have the most free Parliament in the world. We have the most open democracy in the world. We have a style of debate and an openness in our Question Period that forces a daily accountability of our Government. You were conscious of that. In spite of the fact that it tests your patience and endurance from time to time, it is worth it—and you know it is worth it. We have confidence that you will persist in that even-handedness which you have demonstrated throughout.

[*Translation*]

There will be difficult moments. I think that you had some in the last few years. Democracy can sometimes be difficult, especially when ideas and ideals conflict. But I think that with the absolutely impartial and even-handed way you guide the debates and Question Period, we have made progress. And I am sure that we will make much more progress under your leadership.

• (1120)

[*English*]

We may from time to time disagree with your decisions. We may from time to time put you to the test. We may from time to time be tempted to remind you that you are reverting to the original role of the Speaker and representing the King rather than the people.

As you know, we are very jealous in this place of our rights and privileges. But you have the support and co-operation of every member of my Party on this side of the House. We are very satisfied with your election and I want to wish you continued good fortune in the very important, unique role that you hold in our parliamentary democracy.