

*Election of Speaker*

In our country there is also a reason why it has been thought advisable to alternate Speakers. In the main the people of Canada are descended from two great races, the English and the French. It has been the practice because of this to have in one parliament a Speaker whose mother tongue is English, and in the following parliament a Speaker whose mother tongue is French.

There is another respect in which the practice in Canada in the selection of a Speaker differs from the practice at Westminster. At Westminster the nomination of the Speaker is made by a private member; in Canada we have adopted the practice of having the Speaker nominated by a member of the government, as a matter of fact, by the Prime Minister.

However, this difference is not in any way intended to imply any restriction of the freedom of members to make whatever choice they wish. The Speaker of the house is not appointed by the government, he is elected by the Commons. Members of the house are entirely free to make whatever choice they wish. I shall, however, propose a name which I believe will be acceptable to the house generally.

I need not say how important is the position of the Speaker. It is the most honourable and highest office in the gift of the House of Commons. The Speaker is the first commoner; he is also the presiding officer of this house. In that capacity he has the custodianship of the honour, the rights, the privileges and the prerogatives of the house. It is his duty to maintain an attitude of impartiality as between members, regardless of party. It is his duty to protect the rights of members as a whole, and the rights of each individual member. Clearly in such a position one should possess qualities of good judgment and a judicial temperament. The Speaker moreover must be familiar with the rules of the house and have a thorough knowledge of parliamentary procedure. He should, I believe, be chosen if possible in the light of experience he is known to have gained by participation in the affairs of parliament itself. He should be a man of quick perceptions and be at once conciliatory and firm, tactful and just.

I am about to propose the name of a gentleman who, I believe, possesses to quite an exceptional degree this rare combination of qualities. The name is that of Mr. James Allison Glen, the member for Marquette. Mr. Glen has sat in previous parliaments and has been a member of this house for a number of years. In filling positions of this kind if circumstances so permit, it is desirable that

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

recognition should be accorded older members of parliament, especially where in the course of the discharge of their public duties they have become known to possess special qualifications and aptitude for the position in question. Mr. Glen, as we all know, has taken a deep interest in the proceedings of parliament. He has participated in a fair manner in the debates. He has had large experience on committees of the House of Commons. Mr. Glen has had besides training in another particular which should qualify him in special measure for a position which requires the capacity for the judicial management of affairs. In addition to his parliamentary experience he is a prominent member of the bar of Manitoba, a leading king's counsel in that province. That legal training will be of real service to him and to the house in his occupancy of the position of Speaker, should he be elected to that position. He possesses another qualification which I think hon. members appreciate is very important in a Speaker; that is quick perception, the ability to grasp promptly points which are being discussed and to give, I shall not say offhand decisions, but quick decisions where such are demanded. By reason of his parliamentary and legal experience we may expect from him a sound and judicial attitude towards the different questions with which he may be called to deal.

I might say much more of Mr. Glen; he possesses other qualifications which we all know very well; I shall content myself, however, by saying that I feel that he does possess both in character and experience the qualities which will make him, if he is elected, an admirable Speaker, qualities which will enable him to fill that high office with dignity and due authority, with credit and distinction to himself and to this House of Commons and with honour to our parliament.

I therefore move, seconded by Mr. Lapointe (Quebec East):

That James Allison Glen, Esquire, K.C., member representing the electoral district of Marquette, do take the chair of this house as Speaker.

Hon. R. B. HANSON (Leader of the Opposition): Doctor Beauchesne, gentlemen of the House of Commons; I rise not to oppose the motion now before you, but rather for the express purpose of supporting it. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has been good enough to outline some of the functions and duties of the first commoner of the Canadian House of Commons, as patterned on the mother of parliaments. He has named as his nominee, or the nominee of the government, a gentleman who has had long experi-