

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

that he made today, and perhaps the minister might even be disposed to table the report.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether he is on the roster, but I will make a special effort to produce him whether he is on or off the roster.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Will you table him?

• (10:00 p.m.)

**PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

HOUSE OF COMMONS—CONTINUATION OF SPEAKER IN POSITION FOLLOWING NEXT ELECTION—SUGGESTED DISCUSSION BY PARTY OR HOUSE LEADERS

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, March 23, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 4512, I asked the following question:

Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister. Will the right hon. gentleman consider holding discussions with the leaders of the other parties in the House, or ask the House leaders to hold such discussions, concerning the possibility of our taking appropriate steps so that after the next election we will still have as Speaker of this House, on a continuing basis, the distinguished gentleman who now occupies the chair?

At that point *Hansard* has this notation:

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Which, being interpreted, means that there was applause. I am very happy that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) in his capacity as government House leader is here to respond to my question as I put it once again tonight. I was not surprised that His Honour the Speaker did not let us stay on it the other day when I asked the question of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), and I may say that this has been noted in a number of publications, notably in an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on Saturday, April 3. That editorial said:

It may well be that the proposal, coming in the middle of question period, took Mr. Trudeau by surprise. Obviously it is one that deserves a considered response.

The same editorial went on to say:

Mr. Knowles, however, was well advised to raise the matter at this time because there is danger that consideration, if deferred too long, may be futile. The closer we draw to a general election, the greater is the probability that the issue will be decided not by serious consultations but by untoward political events.

That indeed is the reason for my raising the question again tonight and expressing to my friend, the government House leader, the hope that he might be here, as he is, to answer it. Perhaps I might read two more sentences from the *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial for they are sentences with which we all agree. They read:

For three years, the House has been ruled by a Speaker who was not elected to Parliament as the candidate of a party. Never in our history has the chair been held in such respect.

[Mr. McGrath.]

It is because all of us in this House value greatly the leadership and the guidance of the present occupant of the chair that I raise this point again tonight. Perhaps I might be permitted to point out for the record that the Mr. Speaker to whom I am referring is not in the chair at the moment but, rather, Your Honour Mr. Deputy Speaker, which makes it easier for us to speak in glowing terms about His Honour the Speaker of this House of Commons.

It seems to me that the point in the *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial is well taken. This is a matter that we should not leave until a month or two before the next election. We have a Speaker of whom we are all extremely proud, one who guides this House effectively, with tremendous impartiality, and I think there is complete agreement in the House and it would be most desirable to have His Honour the present Speaker preside over us in the next Parliament. There are various ways by which this can be achieved. I have put forward a proposal in the form of a public bill, but that is not the only way it can be done and in rising here tonight I am not speaking with respect to that bill. I simply want the assurance that the matter of doing something will be considered. I am really asking for no more at this time than I put in my question to the Prime Minister on March 23, namely, that appropriate discussions on this matter not be delayed.

I suggest two levels at which discussions should take place. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) can call in the leaders of the other parties and have such a discussion, or if he should feel it more appropriate, at least as a beginning, he could ask the House leaders of the various parties to have that discussion. I am sure I speak for the House leaders on this side of the chamber when I say we are quite willing to do so.

Therefore I put it forward tonight, Sir, without trying to pin down any specific way of dealing with the problem but simply to ask the government House leader—and I hope he will do it—to give the assurance that appropriate discussions will be held soon so that something may be done about this important matter while there is yet time.

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be quite brief because of the short time available. I respond to the question raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) first of all by saying that in the analysis of the operations of the House of Commons that are frequently conducted, sometimes the influence of the Speaker in establishing the mood of the House is overlooked. It is a fact, nevertheless, that in addition to the other parts of the House, the government and opposition parties, the Speaker wields an influence which may be as great if not greater at times than that wielded by any of the other parts of this institution.

I have had the opportunity to observe four Speakers in this House and I believe each has made a valuable contribution to the institution. In general, I think we can be satisfied that in Canada the speakership as an institution has operated effectively over the years. Because we have as a House acted to strengthen the hand of the Speaker,