

the subject, as I would not care to make a motion of this kind with regard to an hon. gentleman on the other side of the House without conferring with him. The hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Boivin) has had an experience in this House of some six or seven years. He is eminently qualified by ability and by temperament to undertake the duties which would devolve upon the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees. Moreover, he has shown a careful study and an intimate knowledge of the rules, as has been demonstrated on more than one occasion when questions of order were discussed in the late Parliament. I have, therefore, great pleasure in moving, seconded by Sir George Foster:

That George Henry Boivin, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Shefford, be appointed Chairman of the Committees of the Whole House.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Mr. Speaker, my right hon. friend has stated the rules of the House correctly, and I hope the spirit in which he makes his motion, of recognizing the different elements which compose our population, will prevail at all times. The rule with regard to the election of a Deputy Speaker has worked satisfactorily in the past, and I am sure I hope it will continue to work so in the future. My right hon. friend has stated that, unfortunately for the Government, it is not blessed with many supporters speaking the language which ought to be spoken by the Chairman of Committees. I regret that as much as he does, but it is his own fault and not the fault of the people to whom he alluded, and when he mends his ways he may be sure of having better support.

For the moment I have to say to my right hon. friend that it is not in accordance with the practice in Great Britain that the presiding officer of the House should necessarily be a follower of the Government; my right hon. friend knows that as well as I do. In Great Britain it has happened over and over again that the leader of the House has recommended the appointment, not of one of his own followers, but of a member of the opposite party, for the Speakership. I think my right hon. friend has stated in the House that it would be preferable if we followed the practice that has prevailed in Great Britain, that the presiding officer should not be appointed on account of his politics, but quite independently of his politics, and I am of the same opinion also. That practice, however, has never been followed in this country, and I do not know

[Sir Robert Borden.]

that it will ever be possible to come to it, but at all events its merits are undoubted. The presiding officer of the House is really a judge between all sides. He is there in the Chair to mete out justice to all and in proper manner, and in this respect the duties of the Deputy Speaker are the same. Mr. Boivin, the gentleman whom my right hon. friend has selected, as I think everybody who has sat in the late Parliament will agree, is well qualified for the office. He is fair and impartial in character, and I believe that when in that Chair he will, as will be his duty, forget that he belongs to a party, and will be there simply to do justice to both sides. It is not a political office; it is essentially a judicial office. When my hon. friend the member for Shefford (Mr. Boivin) first saw his name mentioned in the newspapers as the possible choice of the House, with a very great sense of delicacy, with which I think I ought to acquaint the House, he was not quite sure whether he could accept. He consulted me about it, and I told him, without any hesitation, that if the choice fell upon him he should unhesitatingly accept the appointment, because it could not be considered a political gift. It is not the gift of the Government, but the gift of the House of Commons and of the people of Canada; or rather, it is a recognition by the House of Commons of the qualities which fit him for the position which he is now entrusted with, and for which I, for my part, am very happy to rejoice.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Mr. Speaker, I entirely agree with the right hon. gentleman that it would be most desirable if we could adopt in this country the practice which has prevailed in Great Britain. That practice has sometimes in Great Britain been obliged to withstand pretty severe shocks. In 1895, I recollect, there was a very grave question as to whether a Speaker of one party who had been elected about a year before should be continued as Speaker by the other party; but fortunately, the wise counsel prevailed and he was re-elected, and he served with great acceptance and great distinction. Possibly, the course which is being taken to-day may prove to be a step towards the consummation of the ideal, as to the wisdom of which I certainly agree with the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE (Simcoe). Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: Does the hon. gentleman wish to discuss the motion?