

*Election of Speaker*

member. In the absence of a duly elected Speaker he stands to-day, literally, as the "first commoner."

In these circumstances, and knowing, as most of us do, how exceptionally qualified by natural endowments as well as by long experience, Hon. Mr. Lemieux is to preside over the deliberations of this House, to be the custodian of its honour, rights and privileges, as well as to maintain its venerable traditions, I believe it will be the wish of hon. members of all shades of political opinion that he should be accorded by unanimous vote of this assembly the high and honourable position to which, by long and distinguished service in its proceedings, he has become the rightful heir, and I therefore beg to move, seconded by Mr. Lapointe:

That the Honourable Rodolphe Lemieux, K.C., LL.D., member representing the electoral district of Gaspé, do take the chair of this House as Speaker.

Hon. HUGH GUTHRIE (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Beauchesne, speaking for those who occupy this portion of the chamber and who are the official opposition in this House, I regret that we are not altogether in agreement with the reasons assigned by my right hon. friend the Prime Minister for the nomination which he has just made for the office of Speaker of this parliament. In any remarks which I have to make it must be understood that I have no personal objection to the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux), nor to his qualifications as presiding officer of this House. But I think stronger and better reasons should be shown why this House should be asked to break a very old-established custom in the parliament of Canada.

The Prime Minister has referred to the fact that in the British House of Commons a rule prevails whereby a Speaker once elected is elected for all subsequent parliaments so long as he retains his seat in the House. That rule has never been adopted in Canada and there are grave reasons why such a rule should not be adopted here. We have in this parliament of Canada a system of dual languages that has been recognized from confederation down to the present day, and in order that there should be no disparity between the two predominant races, the Anglo-Saxon race and the French race, in this country, our forefathers in this House, I think wisely decided that the high and dignified office of Speaker of the House of Commons should alternate between representatives of the two predominant races in Canada.

I think I am within the fact when I state that from confederation down to the present time the custom of alternating the Speaker-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

ship in this way has prevailed. I doubt if there has been a single exception. Sir John Macdonald, during his long regime, followed the rule uniformly; Sir Wilfrid Laurier, during his long regime, followed the rule uniformly. Sir John Macdonald, in 1878 started with Mr. Speaker Blanchet, followed by Mr. Speaker Kirkpatrick, followed by Mr. Speaker Ouimet, then by Mr. Speaker White. When Sir Wilfrid Laurier obtained power, he recognized the custom in his very first parliament, in the ninth parliament of Canada, by appointing Mr. Speaker Edgar, who died during his term, and the term was filled out by Mr. Speaker Bain. For the next parliament Mr. Speaker Brodeur was chosen. He entered the government during his term of office, and the balance of the term was filled out by Mr. Speaker Belcourt. In the next parliament we had Mr. Speaker Sutherland, and following him, Mr. Speaker Marcell. Then, when Sir Robert Borden formed his government, we had Mr. Speaker Sproule, followed by Mr. Speaker Sevigny, and Mr. Speaker Rhodes. So we see that the rule was uniformly followed during that long period of time. It is a rule based on fairness, on justice, and on equality, and there is a great deal to be said in favour of it.

My hon. friend from Gaspé was appointed Speaker of the fourteenth parliament. He was again appointed Speaker of the fifteenth parliament, and now the Prime Minister of this country proposes the same individual as the Speaker of this sixteenth parliament, utterly disregarding the well-established and useful rule in this parliament. No good reason has been given by the Prime Minister for this evasion of the rule. It cannot be that he has not plenty of followers of English stock and of English language who would grace the Speaker's chair. Probably he is suffering in that respect from an embarrassment of riches at the present time. Certain it is that there are in the chamber, many followers of my right hon. friend who might well be selected, and the rule thereby maintained.

We all know that the wheel of political fortune will turn, and it is a good thing that it does turn in this country.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. GUTHRIE: My hon. friends opposite, if they stop to ponder a minute, must know that it will turn in the future just as it has turned in the past, and when another government comes into power, are we to follow this precedent which it is proposed to establish here to-day? What would be said if another government established the precedent of ap-