

Brown had served under a Coalition government which was largely Conservative, and was now under a Labour administration, selected as Speaker was commented on very favourably on all sides.

For reasons of our own, however, we have for the most part found it desirable to have a Speaker chosen at the beginning of one parliament, and a new Speaker chosen at the beginning of the following parliament. That has not always been the case; there have been three exceptions. Mr. Speaker Cockburn, Mr. Speaker Rhodes, and Mr. Speaker Lemieux were, as I recall, elected for more than one parliament. However, they are the exceptions rather than the rule. We have thought that, at this time, we should follow the general practice of choosing a new Speaker at the beginning of a new parliament.

The reason why this difference prevails between the custom in our country and that in the United Kingdom, is that it is felt desirable in this as in many other respects to give recognition to the two races that laid the foundations of our country. That recognition is given, after a Speaker whose mother tongue is English has occupied the chair, by choosing at the next parliament a Speaker whose mother tongue is French. If the Commons is agreeable we propose to have that practice carried out at this time. The Commons itself is, of course, complete master of the situation.

May I point out a further difference in procedure. In the United Kingdom the Speaker is usually nominated by a private member and the nomination is seconded by a private member. That is done in order to make it perfectly clear that so far as the government is concerned, or any other authority, there is no authority greater than that of the members of the Commons themselves; and that, among the members, there is equality in the matter of their rights and privileges. In Canada it has been the custom to have the Speaker nominated by a member of the government, and, I believe, in each case the nomination has been by the Prime Minister.

I should like to make it clear that the Commons is not obliged in any way to accept the nomination of the Prime Minister. Any member is free to nominate and to support the candidature as Speaker of any other hon. member. I am hopeful, however, that the name I intend to propose to the house is one which will prove to be generally acceptable, and that the Speaker who is to occupy the chair throughout this parliament will be elected unanimously.

I have noticed from the press that there appears to be doubt in some quarters as to

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

the correct procedure in the selection of the Speaker both in the Commons and in the Senate. I have made it abundantly clear, that so far as the Commons is concerned the government is not in any way seeking to impose a Speaker on the house. We are simply carrying out the custom that has prevailed in the past.

In regard to the Senate, I give the following to the members of the house for purposes of information. From section 34 of the British North America Act it will be seen that the Speaker is appointed by the government. He is not chosen in the same manner as in the Commons. Section 34 reads:

The Governor General may from time to time, by instrument under the great seal of Canada, appoint a senator to be Speaker of the Senate, and may remove him and appoint another in his stead.

The section of the British North America Act which governs the selection of a Speaker in the Commons is section 44. It reads as follows:

The House of Commons, on its first assembling after a general election, shall proceed with all practicable speed to elect one of its members to be Speaker.

That then is the position in which we are at the moment, namely, we are about to elect a Speaker with all practicable speed.

Perhaps I may be permitted, before placing before the house the name of the hon. member I intend to nominate, to say just a word about the position of Speaker and the qualities expected in the occupant of that position.

The position of Speaker is the highest office in the gift of the Commons, it is also the most honourable. The Speaker is the first commoner, he is also the presiding officer of this house and is the custodian of its honour, its rights, its privileges and its prerogatives. The Speaker must possess qualities of good judgment and a judicial temperament, also many other qualities that I would not say are too rare, but, found in combination, are often rare enough. He should in his occupancy of the chair be wholly impartial in his manner and in his preferences as between members of the house. Impartiality between the two sides of the house and towards all members in the house is a first requisite in the fulfilment of the office of Speaker. Hon. members who have been in previous parliaments will agree that a great deal of patience is required, a certain sense of humour, together with as much as possible of a conciliatory attitude. I noticed in reading some remarks made recently in the British