

*The Official Opposition*

the house, in having two or three leaders.

I do believe that the British parliamentary system more or less demands that a political head of a party which occupies the position of an official opposition, should be occupying a seat in parliament. Although I do not wish to have my hon. friend believe that we are anxious to see him leave the position he now occupies, I hope that in the interests of parliamentary practice the chosen leader of the opposition will seek a seat in the house at an early date.

In speaking of changes, I should perhaps mention also the change that has been made in the name of the party opposite. However, I have been long enough in this parliament to see six changes in the name of the party, so evidently change of name so far as it is concerned has grown into a custom. I shall not say more on that at the present moment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, may I say a word in reference to my friend the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Hanson), who has held the position of Leader of the Opposition in this house since the early spring of 1940. When Mr. Hanson undertook to accept the position of Leader of the Opposition in this house he did so, I know, only because of the highest sense of public duty. At that time, he told me personally, and I know as well from his intimate friends, that he was not feeling any too strong physically and had reason to know that he must take particular care of his health if he were to be able to carry on for any length of time in public life. I know too that, after having been in the position of leader for a year or more, my hon. friend was anxious then to give up the leadership of the opposition because of the strain which that position involves; and now, in the third year, he has found it imperative to ask that he should be relieved of its duties.

As I have said, I know something of the anxieties and the responsibilities of a leader of the opposition as well as of a leader of the government. I must say frankly to my hon. friend that I have been amazed at the successful manner in which he has carried on his duties in this House of Commons over a period of three years, for I know something of the strain that he was undergoing all the time. However much any of us may have differed in our political views, I believe the entire membership of this House of Commons has had the greatest admiration for my hon. friend in the sense of duty he has shown. He has been an example to us all in the manner of his fulfilment of the duties of his high office and for the way in which he has carried on from day to day, month to month, and now as it has become from year to year. I think

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

his performance all circumstances considered has been simply wonderful, and I am glad to have this opportunity to tell him so. Many times from this side of the house my colleagues and myself have marvelled how he found it possible to be in his seat the moment the house opened and to be there throughout the sessions, afternoons and evenings, almost without exception. I think it is true that no other member of this House of Commons has been as continuously in his seat during the past three years as the former leader of the opposition.

May I also say to him that I think this house and the country are alike indebted to him for what he has contributed in that time to the discussions and to the carrying on of the business of parliament. He came into the leadership of the opposition with an experience almost second to none of the members on his side of the house. He brought not only his wide business and legal experience but also a knowledge of parliamentary affairs gained over a long period as a member of parliament. For some fourteen years my hon. friend had been a member of this house before he became leader of the opposition; since that time there have been added three more years. He had served as a minister of the crown; as we all know, he is one who is widely read in matters of government and well informed on the questions of the day; and he has greatly contributed to the work of this house. May I say that I thank him warmly for the manner in which he has cooperated with myself and my colleagues in the business of the house during this period of war. There has been no period of history comparable to the present; there has been no time in the affairs of the world when there have been so many problems of the gravest nature, and the business of this house could not be carried on at all at a time such as the present if there were not a spirit of real cooperation between the government, the opposition and other members in parliament. Now I want to say quite frankly, while not taking exception to much in the way of criticism, that the criticism which the government has met with from outside of parliament, where persons are not as well informed on the public questions of the day as are most hon. members of the house, has been much more severe than the criticism in relation to the management of affairs in these years of war which has come from the members of this house, regardless of the party to which they belong. I put that down to the sense of real responsibility which my hon. friend himself has had, and which has been shared by other members in the house.