

House of Commons Debates.

FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PARLIAMENT.

The SIXTH PARLIAMENT of the DOMINION, which had been prorogued from the 16th day of May, 1890, and thence from time to time, was dissolved by Proclamation on the 3rd day of February, 1891, and, Writs having been issued and returned, a new Parliament was summoned to meet for the Despatch of Business, on Wednesday, the 29th day of April, 1891, and did accordingly meet on that day.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

WEDNESDAY, 29th April, 1891.

On which day, being the first day of the meeting of the First Session of the SEVENTH PARLIAMENT, for the Despatch of Business,—JOHN G. BOURINOT, Esquire, Clerk of the House of Commons, DONALD WILLIAM MACDONELL, FRANÇOIS FORTENAT ROULEAU, and HENRY HARTNEY, Esquires, Commissioners appointed by *Dedimus Potestatem* for administering the Oath to Members of the House of Commons, all attending according to their duty;—SAMUEL E. ST. O. CHAPLEAU, Esquire, Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, delivered to the said JOHN G. BOURINOT a book containing a List of the Names of the Members returned to serve in this Parliament.

The aforesaid Commissioners did administer the Oath to the Members who were present, which being done and the Members having subscribed the Roll containing the Oath, they repaired to their seats.

A Message was delivered by René Edouard Kimber, Esquire, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod.

Gentlemen :

The Honourable Sir WILLIAM JOHNSTONE RITCHIE, Deputy Governor, desires the immediate attendance of this Honourable House in the Senate Chamber.

Accordingly, the House went up to the Senate, when the Speaker of the Senate said :

*Honourable Gentlemen of the Senate, and
Gentlemen of the House of Commons :*

The Honourable Sir WILLIAM JOHNSTONE RITCHIE, Deputy Governor, does not see fit to declare the causes of summoning the present Parliament until a Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen according to law, but to-morrow, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the causes of calling this Parliament will be declared.

And the House being returned,

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Mr. BOURINOT, I rise to move :

That PETER WHITE, Esquire, the member representing the Electoral District of the North Riding of the County of Renfrew, do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

To those hon. members who have sat in previous Parliaments I need not say one single word as to the merits of Mr. White, or as to his fitness to perform the duties of this office, this high and important office, with due dignity, and not only with dignity of manner but with impartiality and ability. Mr. White has been in Parliament for fourteen or fifteen years, and from the time he first entered it he took a very considerable position, even when a very young man; and we all know the assiduity and ability with which he performed his part and his duties as a member of the House of Commons of Canada. He was always in his place, always ready for his work, enjoying and earning at a very early period the respect and esteem, and, I may say, the friendship of his associates in Parliament, whether sitting on the right or left of the Speaker; and he vindicated the judgment of his constituents in electing him as their representative, for we all know how well he performed his duties as a member of this House. I do not know on either side of the House any hon. member who would prove, from his demeanour, conduct and ability, more acceptable, without reference to political questions, than my friend the member for the North Riding of Renfrew. Without further remark, I move the resolution, seconded by Sir Hector Langevin.

Mr. LAURIER. Mr. BOURINOT, it is the privilege of the Administration, at the opening of every new Parliament, to suggest a member whom they believe to be worthy of presiding over the deliberations of this House and competent to discharge the important duties of the office of Speaker. It is not unnatural to expect that the Administration, in seeking for such a person, will look exclusively into the ranks of their own followers, however attenuated, diminished, decreased, thinned or decimated they may have been by the verdict of the people. It would be the right, nay, it would be the duty also, of the Opposition, if the person thus offered to the House did not meet with their approbation, to express their dissent by their words, and, if necessary, by their votes. In the present circumstances, I cannot say that I am altogether disappointed at the choice of the right hon. gentleman, and, for reasons obvious, I am rather disposed to agree with his choice. But the right hon. gentleman has developed of late such a sense of loyalty to British institutions, such a deference for British precedents, that I supposed he would be glad to agree to come back to British practice and to follow British precedents, by suggesting to this House the continuation of the late Speaker as the present Speaker of this Parliament. The right hon. gentleman is aware, and more aware than I am myself, that, according to British precedents, my hon. friend from Laval (Mr. Ouimet), who was the incumbent of the office of Speaker during the last Parliament,