

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Thursday, December 9, 1926

FIRST SESSION—SIXTEENTH
PARLIAMENT

This being the day on which parliament is convoked by proclamation of the Governor General for the despatch of business, and the members of the House being assembled:

Arthur Beauchesne, Esquire, M.A., K.C., the Clerk of the House, read to the House a letter from the Governor General's Secretary, informing him that the Chief Justice of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, would proceed to the Senate chamber on Thursday, the 9th of December at 3 p.m., to open the session.

A message was delivered by Major A. R. Thompson, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

His Honour the Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

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

Honourable Gentlemen of the Senate:

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

I have it in command to let you know that His Excellency the Governor General does not see fit to declare the causes of his summoning the present Parliament of Canada until the Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen according to law; but to-morrow, at the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon, His Excellency will declare the causes of calling this parliament.

And the members being returned to the Commons chamber:

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Beauchesne, for the second time this year, hon. members of the House of Commons of Canada have been reminded by the representative of His Excellency the Governor General that the first duty of a new parliament is to elect a Speaker. This, I might remind the House, is not only a duty but a right which is peculiarly its own. It is in no way the

prerogative of the government to appoint the Speaker though, under our parliamentary practice, it has become the custom for the name of an hon. member of the House to be placed in nomination for that high office by the administration of the day.

In the mother of parliaments, whence we derive in the main our parliamentary usages and practices, a Speaker, once elected, is honoured by being re-elected to the chair at the beginning of a new parliament so long as he remains a member of the House of Commons. There has been a difference in practice in this particular in our House of Commons from that which exists in the British House. In our House of Commons the practice in successive parliaments has been for the most part to choose the Speakers alternately from members of English and French origin. To which practice it may be best to adhere is a matter which the House must decide for itself, and which cannot be determined except in the light of existing circumstances by the decision of successive parliaments. At the moment there would appear to be a very special reason why we should, at least for this parliament, follow the British practice.

At the opening of the last parliament, the House unanimously re-elected as Speaker, the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux), who, in the parliament preceding, had filled that high office with great ability, dignity and impartiality, and who is equally felicitous in the use of the English and French languages. When first elected Speaker in 1922, the hon. member for Gaspé had been continuously a member of the House of Commons for over a quarter of a century. This was a distinction which, with but two exceptions, was not enjoyed at the time by any other hon. member. When re-elected Speaker in the month of January of the present year, his period of continuous service as a member of the House of Commons had extended to thirty years, and this distinguished record admitted of but one exception. To-day the period of continuous service of the hon. member for Gaspé runs beyond thirty years and is unparalleled in the case of any other hon.