

Election of Speaker

constraints ensured that this sitting and election were conducted with sophistication and professionalism.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: I want to say to all Members, but especially to new Members, that the Table Officers, as has your Speaker, have adopted an open-door policy for all Members, particularly newly elected Members, and are available for consultation and advice at all times.

The history of the speakership goes back many centuries. Some of you are aware of it and some have only heard dimly of those distant days when the Speaker was chosen by the Commons to take messages to the King. You all know that sometimes those messages were not well received. Undoubtedly the expression "Don't shoot the messenger" stems from those days. Sometimes Speakers did not return. Today, the great test is not when the Speaker goes to see the King but when the Speaker comes to see you.

As I have said in the past, this is not a Chamber for the timid. We have developed an adversarial form of government based on concepts of parliamentary democracy. This is a Chamber where the great decisions of the country are made; and it is a place where history is formulated every day.

Our great friend, the late Tommy Douglas, once said that politics is the "noblest of professions but the vilest of trades". Mr. Douglas knew all too well that men and women from across Canada fight hard to earn a seat in this magnificent Chamber, and that they arrive with great opinions and convictions on the issues facing our nation.

[*Translation*]

Parliament, which is derived from the French "parler", is a forum of free expression and vigorous exchanges. But freedom of expression could not prevail without a reasonable degree of order, for without it, it would be impossible for one to express oneself freely.

[*English*]

Many years ago a former Prime Minister and parliamentarian, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, said this about this place:

One moment it's a cathedral, at another time there are no words to describe when it ceases, for short periods, to have any regards of the proprieties that constitute not only Parliament but its tradition. I've seen it in all its greatness. I have inwardly wept when it's degraded.

As your Speaker, it will be my goal to work with all Hon. Members to ensure the greatness of this institution that we so deeply love and respect and that it be able to function no matter how sincere differences may be, and no matter how passionately views are expressed.

Although the Speaker is, above all, the servant of the House, the Speaker is invested by all of you with considerable authority. Some Speakers I know have had the reputation of being authoritarian.

The 19th Century British Speaker, Arthur Wellesley Peel, was said to be able to quell disorder by rising in his majesty and fixing the offenders with a steely glare. I have tried it, and it does not work.

Thomas B. Reed, who was the President of the House of Representatives some years ago, was also known as being authoritarian. One of his constituents wrote to him asking for a copy of the rules of the House. In his response Speaker Reed sent back an autographed photo of himself.

[*Translation*]

I do not believe any Speaker of the House ever went that far either in Canada or Great Britain.

[*English*]

The speakership throughout the Commonwealth is moulded in the British tradition. The Speaker's responsibilities are exclusively to the House and to its Members.

[*Translation*]

As long as they sit in this illustrious chair, the Speakers must strive to give proof of justice, equity and neutrality, among other qualities.

[*English*]

It is appropriate to be reminded again of those historic words of Speaker Lenthall when, in 1642, the King entered the House of Commons with an armed force and demanded that the Speaker reveal the whereabouts of some Members. The Speaker said:

May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am.

On a personal note, may I take a moment to thank my constituents in Vancouver South for their continued trust, and the members of my family who, through a political career that now goes back over 20 years, have always been at my side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!