

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 1919

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER, 1919.

The House met at half-past 3 o'clock p.m., the chair being taken by the CLERK (the Hon. C. Holmes a'Court).

RESIGNATION OF SPEAKER.

The CLERK: I have to inform the House that I have received the following letter:—

“ 9th September, 1919.

“ To the Clerk,
“ Legislative Assembly,
“ Queensland Parliament.

“ Sir,—I hereby tender my resignation as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

“ Yours faithfully,
“ WM McCORMACK.”

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

Mr. CARTER (*Port Curtis*): I rise for the purpose of nominating the Hon. William Lennon, member for Herbert, for the position of Speaker of this Chamber.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CARTER: I am sure all hon. members will agree that Mr. Lennon's work in this Chamber has been such as to win for him the esteem and goodwill of all who have been associated with him. (Hear, hear!) His career has been of such a character as will eminently fit him for the position of Speaker. During the term that he has occupied the position of Minister for Agriculture, I am sure everyone will agree that he fulfilled his duties in such a manner as to justify the greatest of expectations from him as Speaker of this House. We all know him to be a learned, polished, and honourable gentleman; and one so conscientious that I know of none who would better fill the position to which, I trust, in a few moments Mr. Lennon will be called. I have, therefore, much pleasure in nominating Mr. Lennon for the position of Speaker of this House.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (*Kennedy*): I have much pleasure in seconding the nomination of Mr. Lennon, moved by the hon. member for Port Curtis, and I am sure that hon. members will agree with me that Mr. Lennon is eminently fitted, by his long parliamentary experience, for the position. When Mr. Lennon was deputy leader of the Opposition he acquitted himself with respect, and obtained the regard of all members of this House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I am sure that, if elected to the position of Speaker of this House, he will fill the duties of that high position with credit to himself and to the House, and that he will follow in the footsteps of his predecessor who so ably filled the position. (Hear, hear!) I hope the Hon. Mr. Lennon will be elected to the position, and that he will long remain in it to the advantage of himself and to the advantage of the House and country generally.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I have very much pleasure in nominating the hon. member

for Toombul, Mr. Petrie, for the position of Speaker. I think hon. members on both sides of the House will say that Mr. Petrie, if elected, will prove himself a worthy Speaker, and will fulfil the duties of that position with credit to himself and to this honourable Chamber. Mr. Petrie, at the present time, is "the father of the House." He has been a member of this House for twenty-six years, and we can honestly say that he has earned the respect of every member of this Chamber, no matter what his political views may be.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN: Mr. Petrie is, in my opinion, temperamentally fitted for the position. He is cool and collected in his demeanour, and I am sure that not one hon. member has ever found Mr. Petrie, at any time, lose his temper, or in any way show that he does not possess the qualifications which go to make a successful Speaker. I feel sure one and all will agree with me that it is necessary for a gentleman who occupies the position of Speaker to be cool and collected, to be of such a temperament that he will not lose his temper during a stormy period that may occur at any time in this Chamber, and one who will give a fair deal to everyone, no matter what position he may occupy. And if Mr. Petrie is elected, I feel sure, although he may be a member of the Opposition at the present time, that he will give those sitting on the Government side of the House fair treatment—that, when once elected to that position, he will know no party. (Hear, hear!) It is a non-party position, and the very moment a man is elected to that position he should cease to be connected with party in any shape or form. It is impossible for a man to be a fair and impartial Speaker if he is still closely associated with party politics. It is the duty of the Speaker to give the Opposition equal consideration to that given to members sitting on the Government benches; and, if that is done—no matter who may be elected—he will give general satisfaction to all members of the Chamber. I have very much pleasure in nominating Mr. Petrie, member for Toombul, for the position of Speaker, and I hope he will succeed in being elected to that position.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*): I have pleasure in seconding the nomination of my hon. friend, the hon. member for Toombul, for the honourable position of Speaker of this House.

Mr. SMITH: Why did you not appoint him when you had the chance?

Mr. GUNN: We are not confined to one candidate on our side of the House. There are two or three aspirants to that position, but Mr. Petrie is "the father of the House" now that the member for Leichhardt has gone to the Land Court. Mr. Petrie has been "whip" of this party for many years, and he has given every satisfaction in that position. I do not wish to say anything to the detriment of Mr. Lennon, but Mr. Petrie, in my opinion, would be the better man in the position, and, therefore, I have much pleasure in seconding the nomination moved by the hon. member for Murilla. It is a non-party question, and I am sure if Mr. Petrie is elevated to the position he will hand out even justice to members on both sides of the House.

Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowong*): I should like to say a word or two before this matter

is closed. I remember that on the last occasion we had to elect a Speaker, owing to the haste with which the gentleman nominated accepted the position, the discussion which was likely to have happened on that occasion—and which, I think, would have been of advantage from a general point of view—was avoided. I think the gentleman who held the chair proceeded to take possession with perhaps undue haste, and the House was deprived of that opportunity of discussion which I claim to be the right of the House. It has been quite properly stated by the hon. member for Murilla that the selection of Speaker is one of the most important functions which the House has to attend to. The gentleman appointed to that position should be, above all, impartial as far as it is humanly possible; he should remove himself from the sphere of party politics; he ought to endeavour to hold the balance fairly between the parties on either side of the House. I do not rise to say one word against the hon. gentleman who has been nominated by the hon. member for Port Curtis—Mr. Lennon. I believe that Mr. Lennon has that education and experience which will fit him to do the fair thing between the parties. I do not wish to say one word in derogation of that hon. gentleman. I think, perhaps, the best thing for the House to have done would have been to appoint the Chairman of Committees—(Hear, hear!)—a gentleman who has now had some experience in the chair, and who, I think, would have been acceptable, probably to both sides of the House.

The TREASURER: No nomination we made would be acceptable to the Opposition.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member mistakes the views of this side of the House. This side of the House do not view things in the narrow spirit with which they are viewed from the other side of the House. We wish to see the best man elected to the position. We have suffered a good deal, as an Opposition, during the last three or four years, but I would like to say, in fairness to the hon. gentleman who has occupied the chair, that of more recent date he has shown a disposition to be a little more lenient and a little fairer to the Opposition than he did some little time ago. I think if he had been in that chair for a sufficient period ahead, he probably, in time, would have acquired those qualifications which would have made him a successful Speaker.

Hon. W. McCORMACK: Leniency is not justice.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. gentleman makes that interjection with the desire for me to say things which, perhaps, I would not have said. I can only say that I never expected from the hon. gentleman sitting in the chair anything that was not absolutely fair, but I am sorry to have to say—whether it was due to want of experience on the part of the hon. gentleman or due to his intense party feeling or not—we, on several occasions, have suffered very severely at the hon. gentleman's hands.

Hon. W. McCORMACK: Due to want of knowledge on your part.

Mr. MACARTNEY: It is the duty of the Speaker to uphold the dignity of the House at all times; it is his duty to uphold the privileges of hon. members on whatever side they may sit, but I cannot say at the present

Mr. Macartney.]

junction that the hon. gentleman has done that. I do not wish to go too far in that connection. I do not wish to say things that are personally unpleasant so far as they are unnecessary, but there are many occasions in connection with interference with debate, or in connection with the asking of questions and in other directions that we have cause to complain of. I mention these things now in order that we may obtain something in the nature of different treatment from whomever the House may decide to appoint to the chair.

The TREASURER: You remember the bad time we used to get from the Speaker when we were in opposition.

Mr. MACARTNEY: If I remember aright, I do remember that, if ever any complaint was made against the Speaker, whoever was appointed from the ranks of the Liberal party, it was on account of being too generous to the gentlemen in opposition. (Government laughter.) I have sat on the Government benches since 1900—long before the Labour party came into being—and I have seen celebrated Speakers in the chair, and fairness—and even over-fairness—was always extended to hon. members on the Opposition side of the House. I say that is the spirit in which the Standing Orders should be administered. The appointment should not be a party appointment. The man, on whatever side he sits, who is most fitted to the position by temperament and otherwise, should be appointed to the chair. (Hear, hear!) I say hon. members will be doing honour to themselves, honour to the House, and a fair thing to the country by appointing the man who is best fitted to occupy the position. The hon. member for Toombul has been nominated by the hon. member for Murilla. It is quite true that the hon. member is now, in the absence of the hon. member for Leichhardt, "the father of the House." He is a man of wide experience in connection with the affairs of the House; he has held different positions, and I honestly believe that he is suited for the position, and that he would fill the position with honour. I realise that, at the same time, our friends on the other side do not view these questions as we do. They look at them purely from the point of party politics. The position is given downstairs, and the result is inevitable, and any man who rises on the other side and gives expression to his views is likely to be punished if they do not agree with the general wishes. There is no free agency on the other side of the House. (Government laughter.) I venture to think that, if hon. members on the other side of the House had a free hand, the probabilities are that my friend the hon. member for Toombul would occupy the Speaker's chair this evening.

The PREMIER interjected.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Yes, there is one thing we are all proud of—there is no man on this side who has not an absolutely free hand. That is much more than the hon. gentleman who is said to govern the affairs of Queensland has. He is the weakest man on the other side of the House, if I may tell him so. (Government laughter.) I would not have said so had he not interjected. The hon. gentleman knows he has not a free hand. He knows he has to take his orders from Turbot street. (Government laughter.) His supporters may say what they like, but

[*Mr. Macartney.*

that is the humiliating position which the hon. gentleman occupies.

The PREMIER: You are taking an unfair advantage of me. (Laughter.)

Mr. MACARTNEY: It is not often we have the opportunity of telling the hon. gentleman what we think of him. I certainly feel it is a pleasure to have the opportunity for a few moments of liberty—(loud Government laughter)—realising that the chair is not occupied by a gentleman who exercises undue control. There are so few occasions when we have the opportunity of saying what we think. I have endeavoured to say what I think, as mildly as possible, with as little personality as possible. I trust the House will revert to the good old times when the Speaker was appointed for his worth.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I desire to support the nomination of the hon. member for Toombul. To my mind he possesses all the qualifications which are necessary in order to hold the very important position of Speaker.

Mr. COLLINS: He can tell a good many funny stories. (Laughter.)

Mr. VOWLES: It has been said that the appointment of a Speaker is a non-party appointment.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman says so. Well, let them withdraw Mr. Lennon's nomination and we will nominate Mr. Bertram.

The PREMIER: Why do you not nominate him now?

Mr. VOWLES: If you accept the nomination I will do so.

The TREASURER: What! abandon your own man? (Laughter.)

Mr. VOWLES: We know that caucus has already decided this matter, and the orders have gone forth that Mr. Lennon, having the majority—it was a very narrow majority, I understand—in the caucus, is to be the Speaker. The minority, of course, have to bow to the will of the majority. Though I think Mr. Lennon possesses the qualities necessary for the chair—he has the experience and education—he does not possess them in a greater degree than does the hon. member for Toombul. I know that Mr. Lennon is a man of a very gentle temperament—he never gets excited. (Laughter.) But there have been certain happenings during the last few days which remind me of that game called "musical chairs"—everything is lovely while the band is going, but when the band stops somebody has to lose his seat. That is what has happened here. Somebody has lost his seat, and somebody has to be put in another position. So Mr. Lennon is appointed to that position. I would like hon. gentlemen to vote in this matter on the merits of the two candidates.

Mr. CARTER: So they will.

Mr. VOWLES: The unfortunate thing is, they have already voted and they are bound. I remember some years ago the howl that came from this side of the Chamber, when it was suggested that the Speaker who was appointed at that time was a party nominee. I remember more particularly that the present Premier and his colleague on his right were very loud in their objection to Mr. Armstrong being appointed, because they said it was a party vote. A nomination

was put in from this side of the House, and they used the same argument that we are adopting to-day. What was good argument in those days is not good argument now, because the positions are reversed. I believe people should be sincere in their arguments when they make them, and they should be consistent, too.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES: If there is any consistency at all in politics, they should not make a party appointment of this. The present nomination was agreed to by the caucus this morning, or yesterday.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: By a majority of this House.

Mr. VOWLES: The majority sitting over there do as they like. They flout the Standing Orders in any way they like. All the traditions, all the honour of the House have been flouted in the last week. The House has been degraded, as one newspaper said, simply by a majority who can do as they like by motion.

Mr. COLLINS: Are you not taking advantage of the Clerk of the Assembly being in the chair, in saying these things?

Mr. VOWLES: This is one of the occasions when we have the opportunity of speaking our minds. I do not want to cast any reflections on the previous occupants of the chair, but there have been occasions when I, and other members on this side, have thought we were not getting even justice. I will mention one instance which occurred last Thursday night when I was speaking on an amendment. I was called to order immediately I got outside the bounds of debate. I was followed by the Premier, who was in precisely the same position as I was. He was given all the latitude in the world and spoke on every subject he could think of. He was called to order and was allowed to proceed, and he was called to order again. There was no breach of the Standing Orders as far as I was concerned; the breach was as far as Mr. Speaker was concerned. I believe he admitted it afterwards. As I have said, there have been occasions when we thought we were not getting the justice we should have. I hope those occasions will not arise again. I hope that, whenever the time expires of whoever is appointed to the chair, we will be able to congratulate him on having given us the justice to which we were entitled under the rules and procedure of this House.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): I must confess I was rather taken by surprise this afternoon. (You look very surprised! and Government laughter.) I am gratified at all the nice things which have been said about me, but I cannot forget the fact that I would have a very poor show judging from the numbers on the other side. However, I do not wish to waste the time of the House. It is very nice to know that I have had the honour of being nominated. To save time, I desire to withdraw.

Mr. LENNON (*Herbert*): I submit myself to the will of the House, Mr. a'Court.

The SPEAKER-ELECT (Mr. Lennon) was then conducted to the chair by Mr. Carter and Mr. O'Sullivan.

The SPEAKER, speaking from the dais, said: I desire to thank the House most heartily for what is practically a unanimous appointment.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

1919—2 s

The SPEAKER: It is a unique compliment to be elected practically without opposition. I look to members on both sides of the House to support me in discharging the duties I have been called upon to undertake. I thank the House sincerely for the honour they have conferred upon me.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I desire to offer you, Sir, my congratulations on assuming the high and honourable office of Speaker. I do it, not only in accordance with time-honoured custom, but in all sincerity as an old personal friend.

Mr. GUNN: I rise to a point of order. Is it not one of the rules of the House that the House should be opened by prayer?

The SPEAKER: Not on this occasion. (Loud laughter.)

The PREMIER: I offer you my congratulations, Mr. Speaker, as a personal friend whom I have known for very many years before my entry into Parliament, as a member of the House, particularly, and more recently as a Cabinet colleague. I very much regret parting company with you as a colleague, and I am deeply sensible of the good work you have done during the more than four years in which you have administered the Department of Agriculture and Stock. I think you have occupied that position longer than any other Minister during the history of Queensland. I am sure your long experience in parliamentary practice will eminently fit you to successfully discharge the responsible duties attaching to your new office. I feel confident that, in saying this, I express the feelings of hon. members on both sides of the House—indeed, they have expressed their feelings themselves. (Hear, hear!) I am sure that you will fill the position with dignity, ability, and impartiality; with credit to yourself, and, I am sure, to the entire satisfaction of hon. members on both sides of the House. I congratulate you.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACARTNEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to add a word of congratulation to the words that have fallen from the Premier. As I said at an earlier period, I recognise the qualities of ability and education which fit you to do honour to the chair which you now occupy. As the Premier has said, it is your duty to uphold the dignity of the House, and extend impartiality to both sides. I believe you are capable of carrying out to the fullest extent the duties that fall to the office, and I can only assure you that, as far as the Opposition are concerned, you will receive all the assistance we can give you in carrying out your duties and in impartially administering the affairs of this Chamber. The dignity of the House is of all importance. The privilege of members on both sides is of all importance. We recognise that the gentlemen who sit on the other side to-day in time to come will occupy these benches.

The TREASURER: Oh, no chance! (Laughter.)

Mr. MACARTNEY: We feel that we are entitled to your consideration. We feel that we are entitled to our privileges and rights just as much sitting on this side of the House as though we were sitting on the other side of the House. I trust that during the period of Parliament the happy relations which should exist between members and Mr. Speaker will exist. I wish you every success in the office you now hold.

Mr. Macartney.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): I desire to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on having attained to your high office. I desire to express the hope that when you appear here, after having been sworn in, you will appear in your ordinary attire; that you will show respect to the intelligence of this House; that you will show that this House shall respect you, and they will show, by the respect that you show them, that they are prepared to respect your ruling just as faithfully as though you garbed yourself in the gown that usually accompanies that office.

Hon. J. G. APPEL (*Albert*): Mr. Speaker, permit me to add a word to the congratulations which you have received from the leader of the House and the leader of the Opposition. You have inherited all those attributes of manner and deportment which, when coupled with education, so [4 p.m.] much add to the honour and dignity of a member who is chosen to fill the most honourable position within the gift of members of this House. You are the custodian of the honour and privileges of members of the House. From my knowledge of you, I believe that you will worthily sustain and maintain the dignity of the chair. I feel satisfied that the rights and privileges of members of this House will be safeguarded by you, and will be accorded to each and every member. May Providence grant you good health while you are permitted to occupy the chair.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: I desire to thank the Chief Secretary, the leader of the Opposition, and the other honourable members who followed them, for the very kind references they have made to myself, and to express the hope that in due time I may deserve the good opinion they have evidently formed of me.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The PREMIER: I have to announce that the following changes in the personnel of the Government of the State have taken place: The resignations of the Hon. William Lennon and the Hon. Herbert Freemont Hardacre, as Secretary for Agriculture and Stock and Secretary for Public Instruction, respectively, and as members of the Executive Council, and the resignation of the Hon. John Huxham as Home Secretary have been accepted by His Excellency the Governor. His Excellency has appointed the Hon. John Huxham, the Hon. William Neal Gillies, and the Hon. William McCormack to be Secretary for Public Instruction, Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, and Home Secretary, respectively, and the Hon. William McCormack and the Hon. James Larcombe to be members of the Executive Council. I now lay on the table of the House a copy of the "Government Gazette" which has been issued to-day containing the notification of these changes.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER-ELECT.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I have to announce that His Excellency the Governor will be prepared to receive you, as Speaker-elect, at 11 o'clock to-morrow morning.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 4 o'clock p.m.

[*Mr. Stopford.*]