

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

Fourth Parliament—First Session.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Toronto, Jan. 7th, 1880.

The first session of the fourth Parliament of Ontario was opened this afternoon at three o'clock. The attendance of members was large, and the galleries were partially filled with spectators. While the members were indulging in general handshaking and promiscuous conversation on the floor of the Chamber, silence was suddenly imposed upon them by the arrival of His Honour the Lieut.-Governor at precisely five minutes past three. His Honour, who was accompanied by his aides-de-camp, having taken his seat on the throne,

Mr. HARDY, Provincial Secretary, said he was commanded by the Lieut.-Governor to state that it was not his desire to declare the causes for summoning this Legislature until after they had elected a Speaker, but that to-morrow at three o'clock in the afternoon he would declare the causes of his calling this Parliament.

His Honour then withdrew.

After an interval of about fifteen minutes, the Clerk, Col. Gilmour, called the House to order.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

Mr. MOWAT rose and said:—Mr. Clerk,—In accordance with what has just been said on behalf of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, and in accordance also with the express requirement of the British North America Act, our first duty is to elect a Speaker. It has been customary in the British American Provinces that the same Speaker should not occupy the chair for more than one or two terms, however ably and efficiently he may have discharged his duties. Yielding to that custom, I have now to propose to the House the name of another hon. member as Speaker of this House. There are many hon. members who have had the advantage of considerable Parliamentary experience, any one of whom, I am sure, would make a good Speaker, and the nomination of any one of whom would give satisfaction to this House. When I name one of them, I do so, not at all thinking that he necessarily possesses more of the qualifications required for the office, or that he has larger claims to the office, than several other hon. gentlemen; but I am satisfied, and the House will be satisfied, if I propose one who, at all events, has qualifications inferior to none, and claims likewise inferior to none. (Hear, hear.) I believe I am doing that which is agreeable to this House in naming for this purpose the hon. member for Wellington Centre. (Cheers.) That hon. gentleman has been now a member of the Legislative Assembly of this Province for eight years. This is his ninth session, and those who have had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, whether they sit on that side or on this side of the House, I am sure share equally in the esteem and confidence and respect with which we regard him. As Chairman of the Printing Committee, as Chairman of the important Committee on Public Accounts, and as Chairman of Committee of the Whole, my hon. friend has had opportunities for showing his fitness for the office to which I now nominate him, and he has efficiently performed the duties attaching to all these positions. My hon. friend, as a matter of taste, has not chosen to take that part in the debates of the House which his abilities would have enabled him to do, but no member of the House, as long as he has been a member of it, has done more efficient work in all matters connected with the business of the House other than the debates of the House. (Hear, hear.) And I have all the more satisfaction in making this nomination because, in doing so, I believe I name that gentleman who has been, perhaps, of all members in the House, the longest

time an active politician. My hon. friend commenced his active political life in a very early period, and took part in all those old questions which were contended in this Province in days gone by, and which are now matter of history. As a political writer, my hon. friend took a very active part in the discussions and agitations with reference to those old principles of representation by population, of freedom from the domination of another Province, and of secularization of clergy reserves. He was also among the earliest and most persevering agitators of such measures as the ballot, the reasonable exemption of goods of debtors from execution, the abolition of property qualification for members of Parliament, the extension of the suffrage, and various other matters with which we are now familiar, and as to the propriety of which all parties now concur, and which now no longer set dividing lines between the two political parties of this country. My hon. friend has the satisfaction of knowing that all these questions in which he took so deep an interest have been settled as he wished them settled—all these agitations have resulted in the triumph of the principles he advocated. (Hear, hear.) I venture to hope that the nomination of Col. Clarke will be received with the unanimous concurrence of this House; for we must all agree that there is no man on whom we can more confidently rely to discharge the duties of the office with ability, dignity, and impartiality. I propose that Charles Clarke, member for the Centre Riding of Wellington, do take the chair of this House. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. WELLS—I am very glad that I have been given an opportunity of seconding the proposal of the hon. the Attorney-General. Having occupied that chair so recently, I can hardly allude to those qualities which should belong to the Speaker of the House, and which Col. Clarke unquestionably possesses, without reminding myself and reminding this House of how few of those qualities I possess. But this I can say, that there is no gentleman who is more deservedly popular than Col. Clarke, there is no gentleman who has paid more or closer attention to the rules of this House, nor more highly enjoyed its respect and confidence than he—a respect and confidence now about to be shown by his election as Speaker. As Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means for the last three or four years, as Chairman of the Whole House, and of Select Committees, he has acquired a knowledge of many of the details of Parliamentary practice which can only be acquired in that way. But he has acquired also tact and skill in the management of the House, and that habit of prompt and quick decision which is so necessary to the proper discharge of the duties of Speaker. He has acquired even more than that—that graceful ease and pose which can only be attained by actual and sometimes long exercise of the judicial capacity. (Laughter and cheers.) He goes into that chair with the good-will of every member of this House, and with the warm congratulations of every member of both sides. This is not a trifling matter to him or to the House. Having the sympathy of the House he will have its support, and it is the support of the House which constitutes the only sure and certain foundation for the moral authority of the Speaker. The Speaker has often been called the guardian and the custodian of the rights and privileges of the House; but the House ought to be—in fact—the guardian of its own rights and privileges. But it can be, I venture to say, more the guardian of its rights and privileges than it has been in the habit of being. It is in the power of the House to assist the Speaker to a large extent in the discharge of his duties, and Col. Clarke will, as I think, always accept with gratitude the assistance of the House in calling attention to any departure from the rules. And I know it to be one of the most disagreeable duties the Speaker has to perform to call the attention of disorderly members, particularly when honourable Ministers of the Crown are involved (Opposition cheers and laughter) or leading members of the Opposition—(Government cheers and laughter)—although I am very glad to admit that such cases occur only at long