

**RETIREMENT OF SIR KENNETH BRADSHAW,
CLERK OF THE U.K. HOUSE OF COMMONS
AND PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION**

Speeches in the House of Commons on 13 July 1987

3.51 pm.: *The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham):*

I beg to move, That this House requests Mr. Speaker to convey to Sir Kenneth Bradshaw KCB on his retirement from the office of Clerk of the House its deep gratitude for all his devoted work in the service of the House throughout a long and distinguished career.

I am confident that the motion unites the House in paying tribute in this time-honoured manner to someone who has held, with distinction, a number of important posts in the Clerk's Department over many years, and who has held for the past four years, as Clerk of the House, the highest office in the service of the House.

Sir Kenneth Bradshaw will be retiring at the end of August. By then it will have been 40 years, following war service, in which he was mentioned in dispatches, since he joined up, so to speak, in the Clerk's Department. I believe that that is longer than the continuous membership of any hon. Member now in the House.

To have maintained over such a length of time a record of total loyalty, integrity and devotion to the service of the House is a notable achievement in itself. To have done so with undiminished enthusiasm, never failing courtesy, and with, I believe the musical term is such "brio", is a still greater one.

In particular, throughout his service—both as Clerk of the Overseas Office and in other posts, particularly in the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament—of which, I understand, he is currently the President—he has for many years done an enormous amount to forge international links and friendships between those who service parliamentary institutions. His hospitality and kindness in that work have become legendary worldwide.

Here in Westminster Sir Kenneth's name will also always be particularly associated with his concern throughout his service with improving the welfare and status of the staff of the House at every level. Always patient and considerate in negotiations, he has done much to resolve staffing disputes, like the protracted grading review, which had seemed intractable for many years. The present staff relations in the House owe much to Sir Kenneth's guiding judgment and personal concern. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you will agree that in this, and in many other matters, the House of Commons Commission is deeply indebted to Sir Kenneth.

Another important and lasting contribution which Sir Kenneth, in collaboration with the present Clerk of Committees has made, has been his published work on the comparative procedural workings of Parliament and the United States Congress. This broke new ground and is still recognised as a standard work.

On the less formal side, I understand that Sir Kenneth has been a social pillar of the Parliamentary Golfing Society for many years. With regard to the musical life of Parliament, his vocal style in his occasional interventions in our proceedings once, I recall, led a journalist to describe him as "the last of the bel canto Clerks".

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that every hon. Member here will, as I do, wish Sir Kenneth every happiness in his retirement. He enters it with the profound gratitude of all those who recognise how much the work of this House of Parliament has depended throughout the centuries on the proud traditions of the high office which he has so capably upheld, and which he now hands on to others, maintained and enhanced.

3.55 pm.: *Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): (Leader of the Opposition)*

I am happy to join the Leader of the House, and I am sure the whole House, in supporting the motion of gratitude for the distinguished service that has been given by the Clerk, Sir Kenneth Bradshaw.

Sir Kenneth has been a servant of the House since 1947 and has brought to all the offices that he has held in the course of his service that remarkable combination of commitment and dispassion that produces excellence in our British public and democratic administration.

The standard of Sir Kenneth's contribution is made more remarkable by the fact that it has continued for four decades. While it is true, as Lord Wilson reminded us, that a week is a long time in politics, 40 years must be an eternity to be above politics.

In those 40 years Sir Kenneth has performed, as the Leader of the House reminded us, in two spheres that are connected with this Parliament and international democracy. Those services have been distinguished and distinctive. First, it will be within the memory of many hon. Members that he contributed his capabilities as Clerk to the Overseas Office in this Parliament for four years. Further proof of his reputation among our fellow parliamentarians and those who serve them in other Parliaments is to be found in the fact that Sir Kenneth is President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Both that general involvement and the particular role that he played as Clerk of the Legislature of Saskatchewan 11 years ago means that there can be few among the ranks of Secretaries General of Parliaments who can rival Sir Kenneth's parliamentary internationalism.

Sir Kenneth's second source of domestic and international distinction has been his co-authorship, with Mr. David Pring, of the excellent and now classical work, "Parliament and Congress". The reviewers who greeted the book back in 1972, and its reprint in 1981, commented on the lucidity, scholarship and readability of the book. I can testify to all three of those qualities. Before I went to the United States in 1976—during the recess—to do a series of lectures and television programmes on comparisons and contrasts between our Parliament and the United State Congress I naturally reached for this book, and when I read it its clarity and detail gave me the same sense of gratitude as would be felt by someone who thought that he was climbing on to a life raft and discovered that he had boarded a luxury liner. This work is everything that the reviewers said it was.

My copy of that volume is at home, but to refresh my memory this morning I borrowed the Library's copy. I intend to take it back, which is another breach of

convention, later in the day. It is clearly a well-used book, as any hon. Member can see, and it is a testimony to the respect that the book commands among right hon. and hon. Members that, in all of its 412 pages, only one page is marked, and one would exaggerate to call it defaced. On the contents page there is the merest line of a ballpoint pen around one item: "Salaries and Remuneration". Clearly, the book has not only lucidity but utility.

As hon. Members will know, those qualities are not confined to the book. Indeed, they have been the qualities, together with many others, that have distinguished Sir Kenneth throughout our acquaintance with him. I am sure that anyone who has known Sir Kenneth will regard him as a friendly man, an excellent communicator and a complete master of procedure, utterly dependable in his judgment and advice. For all those reasons, but most of all because of the distinguished service that he has given our democracy and our Parliament, I am sure that all here and all who have worked with Sir Kenneth over those 40 years wish him a long, active and fulfilling retirement, with limitless golf partners and a limitless supply of opera tickets.

4 pm.: *Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge):*

I am pleased to support the motion and to follow the Leader of the Opposition. As a former colleague of Sir Kenneth Bradshaw and the first Clerk of the House who was foolish enough to get himself elected as a Member of Parliament, I have profound respect for my more shrewd and more sensible former colleague. What the Leader of the Opposition has said is absolutely true. The privilege of being a servant of the House, whether as a member of Parliament, a Clerk or official, is real. I learnt that privilege from, among others, Kenneth Bradshaw. He has been a fine servant of the House. I am honoured to have known him as a colleague and a friend, and he deserves well of the House.

4.1 pm.: *Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed):*

On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I support the motion with enthusiasm. As Clerk of the House, Sir Kenneth Bradshaw has been unfailingly courteous and consistently helpful to hon. Members, including those from minority parties. He has shown that impartiality and independence of the Government which the House requires of its Clerks. He has embodied and advocated that high view of the Clerkship in his international activities as President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments.

Sir Kenneth's Clerkship has coincided with many changes in the way in which the House is run. This is perhaps symbolised by the fact that, so far as I can recall, he was the first Clerk who was interviewed extensively for the post of Clerk. He carried out that task in a manner that involved greatly extended managerial responsibilities, through the Board of Management—responsibilities which he discharged with great tact and skill. In doing so, he provided enormous assistance to the House of Commons Commission.

Those of us who worked closely with Sir Kenneth in that or in other spheres have come to regard him not only as an outstanding servant of the House but as a man of great integrity and charm and a congenial colleague. We all wish him the greatest happiness and activity in his retirement. We pay tribute to the work that he has done on behalf of the House.

4.2 pm.: *Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray):*

In adding the support of the Scottish National party, I speak not only for the

party's current Members in the House, but for all those who have served since 1967. The Scottish National party has been continuously represented in the House since 1967, and that period spans some 50 per cent of Sir Kenneth's service to the House. All of us have greatly appreciated his objective advice and courteous assistance over the years, and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

4.3 pm.: *Mr. D. E. Thomas (Merionnydd Nant Conwy)*:

I should like to associate myself with the remarks that have been made on behalf of minority parties in paying tribute to Sir Kenneth's work in the House. Inevitably, tributes of this kind are a celebration both of an individual's career and of the nature of our institution. It is perhaps appropriate that we should speak to this motion on a day when we have been debating the nature of our procedures and our rules of order. In adding my best wishes to Sir Kenneth in his retirement, I ask him to consider whether he will have the time to prepare a further edition of his excellent study "Parliament and Congress", because it might be influential in liberating some of our procedures.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved, nemine contradicente,

That this House requests Mr. Speaker to convey to Sir Kenneth Bradshaw, KCB, on his retirement from the office of Clerk of the House, its profound appreciation of his forty years of devoted service to the House, and his maintenance of the highest traditions of his office.