

The Address—Mr. Macquarrie

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Queens): Mr. Speaker, in my first words to this crowded, hushed and expectant chamber I should like to congratulate the mover of the address in reply, the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo (Mr. Jamieson) upon his most impressive and interesting address. As one representative from the province where confederation all began 103 years ago, I should like to say that we welcome his province, the latest province to join confederation. I hope it will not be the last. I hope that in the future there will be other provinces and that they too will be islands. I wish also to congratulate the seconder, the hon. member for Nicolet-Yamaska (Mr. Côté) and say to him that while he may not have been so extensive in his remarks as the mover he did show a great deal of daring because no timid man would go out of his way to exalt the agricultural policies of this government. I would be loath indeed to try to convince the potato growers of Prince Edward Island of the excellence of the said government's policies.

There is a general tendency to scorn and denigrate this particular type of debate, the throne speech debate. Members of the press constantly say that it is a case of droning on and that usually it gets worse as it goes along. As I am the last speaker today I know where that places me. Some say it is a waste of time. I do not make such a suggestion; nor do I welcome the idea that the throne speech debate should be curtailed, although I am not by any means one of the most loquacious men in this parliament.

● (5:40 p.m.)

We are here as a representative assembly and representative government antedates responsible government. We are not here as a legislative mill for the executive arm, but here because a number of Canadians freely elected us to be here, and we cannot serve them unless we are able to speak freely once we get here. This is of course what indirect democracy means. I suppose if one wanted to look at it studiously he would find that much of the legislation which finally emerges as the outpourings of the government began with the suggestion of some humble private member whose voice went unheard year after year and was finally picked up by some government.

I agree with what the member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) said this morning, that we must be ever zealous of the rights and privileges of private members, and I have detected during my ten years here a

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard).]

continuing encroachment in this regard. Let me say right now that I for one have no intention of accepting during this session that development which occurred in the last session, the continuous obliteration of the private members hour. All sorts of interesting things were on the order paper last session but we never had a chance to discuss them.

Of course some improvements in our procedures are necessary. I am a Conservative, but I am also a progressive, but I should like to have some reasonable conviction that a change is also an improvement before I want to make that change. Some improvements have been discussed by members well versed in our rules. I think we must reach the stage when we have a fixed adjournment. There is nothing in my opinion more degrading than the constant dangling before us of an adjournment, to which we have been subjected for the last several years. I find this altogether degrading, that we must do such and so or we will not get out. No schoolmaster would treat underclass children in that particular way.

Since I have been here we have spent 25 or 27 sitting days on this foolish process of waiting for votes to be taken. Again let me say that I am in favour of the electronic voting device.

The lengthy speech from the throne this year dealt with things other than announcements of government policy. I think that is commendable and satisfactory. Surely this is a time to branch out and outline a sort of state of the nation address. But why did it have to be so loquacious; why did it have to be so long, and why did it have to be so verbose? I read somewhere that it was the cornucopia of government planning. I think of a different metaphor, that it is the warehouse of second hand goods.

One thing I did not hear in the speech from the throne was the pronoun "my". Down through the years when the head of state opened parliament under our system he referred to "my" government, and "my" ministers. One observes in this long speech the expression "the" government. What is the reason behind that change? The Governor General is in fact the head of state under the Queen; he is the apex and all the rest under our constitution comes under him. I am wondering about that change. Surely it was not accidental, and if it was not accidental, then what does it mean? Does it suggest that the role of the Governor General is less significant? Does the word "the" instead of "my"