

*The Address—Mr. Churchill*

wanted to speak tomorrow or Monday and had a carefully prepared speech which they did not want to break up. I am also informed that there are some members of the House of Commons on both sides of the house who are busily engaged with our friends from the south and are counting on a little more time for their interviews and social intercourse. So there had to be a sacrificial lamb tonight to fill in the last 15 minutes, and it is a strange thing, Mr. Speaker, that on this side of the house my colleagues seem to think of me when these occasions occur.

Consequently, sir, I am now addressing the house, not because I had a prepared speech ready, with that profundity of thought that should be given to speeches that are presented in this house; rather I am here to express some of the thoughts that have occurred to me from time to time, and some of the thoughts that I would have put into a speech had I had the opportunity for preparation. For I am a great believer in this institution, and I think that people who enter parliament and students of the history of our country would do well to pursue a course of study that will give them the background of the development of our system of government. If people would do that I think there would be less careless criticism of this institution.

I recommend to the hopeful young people of this country who are looking forward to taking a place in the government of Canada, and who already know that they are much more able than some of us who are here in this building, that they make an intensive study of the development of parliamentary institutions. I recommend to them a study of the history of Great Britain in the seventeenth century, when the fundamental freedoms were established, when the absolute monarchy was reduced in its power, and parliament started on the course of becoming the supreme governing body in the kingdom. They should then pursue that study through the eighteenth century, and particularly the nineteenth century when the adult population, with the sole exception of the women, who did not reach our exalted state till the twentieth century, was given the right to select its rulers.

With that background of information with regard to this institution and our system of parliamentary government, I cannot understand, sir, how anyone could criticize this system, other than in its smaller details, such as methods of procedure and things of that nature. I cannot understand how, with that

knowledge and understanding of the long years of struggle to obtain the freedoms that we enjoy, anybody could attempt to undermine in any way the foundations of this system.

I think that some of those who carelessly criticize parliament have not the background of knowledge that, in my opinion, they should have. It has been a long struggle over centuries to obtain freedom—freedom to do exactly what we are doing here, to express our opinion on any subject under the sun without fear or favour.

That freedom was not enjoyed in earlier years. There were great restrictions placed upon people who spoke out of turn, just as that restriction is applied in some countries today. It is only a few days ago that in the country in which human freedom originated, Greece, the liberty of the individual was restricted. Pleasant as it might be to imprison your political opponents to get them out of the way, and while we sometimes toy with that idea here, when we get a little aroused, nevertheless we realize that that is not the way in which free men can live and enjoy freedom and develop their country and civilization. It takes only a matter of hours with a properly prepared *coup d'état* to destroy a free institution—whether temporarily or permanently, who knows?

There has been a great deal of criticism of parliament during the last few years. This is not new. I happened to be reading a book dealing with the year 1808, about the letter writer Creevey, who at that time was a member of parliament. He was a voluminous letter writer, and in one of his communications he was talking about the apathy and indifference of the public to parliament. This as I say was away back in 1808, Mr. Speaker, when the Napoleonic war was still going on. Great Britain became engaged in the Peninsula war assisting Portugal and Spain. Yet Creevey, a member of parliament, writes about the apathy and indifference of the populace of Britain to parliament.

● (9:40 p.m.)

And so it goes on. We know of all the apathy and indifference in this country with regard to issues which we are discussing here, and which appear to make no appeal to people abroad. Nevertheless, despite the occasions on which parliament appears not to be in touch with the public and the occasions when the public appears to be disinterested in this institution, all that is required is some crisis and immediately the people turn their