

*The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker*

the majority prevails and that we have much to offer one to the other, joined in acclaiming the fact that Newfoundland is now one of the provinces of this dominion.

Democracy lives only when there is an infusion of able young men such as these whom I have mentioned, and there are others. Democracy lives only when there is a realization that there is a function to be performed by those who today sit to the left of Mr. Speaker—not immediately to his left, may I say, but somewhat removed therefrom. As I listened yesterday to the hon. member for St. John's West, and heard him describe the strangeness of the atmosphere of parliament—and it does have that effect upon all new members—I went to the library and got there, sir, a description of parliament which, with your permission, I should like to read. In its masterly language and in its breadth of vision it portrays something of what parliament means. It was written by the Hon. Quintin Hogg, one of the most distinguished of the younger parliamentarians in England. There is a feeling of frustration experienced by the member who comes to parliament for the first time, and surprise that parliament does not move faster. It is true that parliament moves in a traditional way with its procedure and practices brought up to date by changes, often belatedly, to meet ever-changing conditions. But, parliament is more than procedure—it is the custodian of the nation's freedom. Mr. Hogg describes it in these words:

Parliament is not like a building designed and constructed by a single architect such as the Parthenon, St. Paul's cathedral, or the Empire State building. Parliament resembles rather an ancient family mansion which has been lived in continuously for a period of centuries, and has served the needs of those that have dwelt therein by constantly modifying and adding to its conveniences from generation to generation . . .

To those who live in it, it is a priceless possession not to be exchanged for anything more meretricious and unified. But those who are unfamiliar with its history are sometimes apt to lose themselves in its winding corridors and to be surprised and trapped by floors built at different times and on separate levels.

That is what parliament means to me: Parliament, the protector of the people's freedom.

I congratulate the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) upon his election to office. I have known him over the years, and in the earlier days of the Canadian Bar Association; and while we are separated by eighteen feet of green carpet, they do not lessen the respect I hold for him, not only personally but as the occupant of the high position he now holds.

I say, too, that in his address in this debate the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) showed that he was possessed of that chivalry

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

in public life without which parliament becomes a mere sham. I shall not fight the election over again; we shall have plenty of opportunity for that. The government has an overwhelming majority; and the responsibility of His Majesty's loyal opposition has been thereby increased and intensified. In this country we do not uphold the doctrine of a single-party state. A single-party parliament denies democracy. It inevitably leads to the dictatorship of government which tends to destroy the rights to those who do not belong to the majority.

Both in the House of Commons and in the Senate, members of the government party have overwhelming majorities. In consequence there is placed upon the opposition responsibilities which are greater than they otherwise would be. While we of His Majesty's loyal opposition should accept the overwhelming majority of the government as a condition having the approval of the people of Canada, we shall not accept it as an endorsement of everything this government chooses to bring before the House of Commons, as though it had received a mandate from the people for every measure it proposes.

We in the opposition have a responsibility to assure the people of this country that any invasions of freedom, whether the fundamental freedoms or otherwise, shall be resisted in parliament.

Some have said to me since the election that with the increase in the majority supporting the government there would be little opportunity for those of the opposition to develop their arguments. I did not believe that such would be the case. During the last few days I think it has been shown that I was right; that the members of the government realize that we of the opposition, small in numbers though we be, have a responsibility to discharge, to the end that we may preserve inviolate those rights and privileges which from time to time might be subject to attack.

It used to be said that the function of an opposition was "to propose nothing and oppose everything." That is not the view of those who have a proper appreciation of our system. Some say parliament talks too much. Parliamentary democracy can exist only where there is public discussion and debate; where public discussion is denied, freedom itself will die, and the history of other nations has shown that freedom disappears when there is no effective opposition.

We intend to support—this has been the course I have always followed—all measures which we believe to be for the general benefit of the nation. We intend to be on guard and to scrutinize every action of the government