

The Address—Mr. Jamieson

member and myself have been put at the same end of the room; I think there is a real problem there.

In all seriousness, I do intend to talk about the future. The leader of the New Democratic Party this afternoon said, "Tell us what you are going to do".

Mr. Nielsen: He is your leader, too.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: I am pleased my hon. friend said that the leader of the New Democratic Party is my leader, too; it gives me an opportunity to talk about something to which I believe we all ought to pay a little attention in this House.

Mr. Alexander: Are you going to be serious now?

Mr. Jamieson: Very serious. Do you want to sit back and listen?

An hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Jamieson: Relax. It is interesting to note that we have been talking a good deal—of course the media has been engaged in this to the maximum extent possible, and as someone who lived in the media for many years, I understand it—about majority and minority governments and the like. This particular parliament, of course, is one in which there is a so-called minority government. But it is an oversimplification to talk in those terms and simply speak of the number of seats and whether that establishes either a majority or a minority. I did a little arithmetic this afternoon and it is interesting to note the result. I hope hon. members will accept the fact that this is a totally non-partisan comment.

• (2030)

Mr. Nielsen: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jamieson: I see the hon. member of the opposition, who is completely incapable of non-partisan comment, does not agree with me; but that is beside the point. In any event, I do say with all sincerity that having looked over the results of the election, I begin to wonder what really constitutes a majority or a minority government in this country, in terms of any group being able to say that it speaks for the majority of the people. For instance, there are 151 members of this House—they exist on this side and they exist in all parties—who are here despite the fact that far more than 50 per cent of the voters in their constituencies opposed them.

An hon. Member: What about the highlanders?

Mr. Jamieson: I have been reading constituency reports from Nova Scotia as well as from other parts of the country.

In any event, what I am saying and what I am seeking to do, as I said, in an objective fashion, is to point out that if one looks at the statistics and goes beyond simply the first set of those statistics, that is, the number of seats that a party controls or does not control in the House or who sits on Mr. Speaker's right or Mr. Speaker's left, one finds that substantially more than half of us are here with substan-

[Mr. Jamieson.]

tially more than half of the voters in our constituencies saying that they did not want us. I use the word "us" and not "you"; I am talking about it in a general sense. In other words, the truth of the matter is that historically in this country—and I think the exceptions probably prove the rule—we have had a situation where it has been very rare when any party has had a true majority.

The hon. member will find the boy's room on the right, if he has not discovered it already.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jamieson: I made that remark, Mr. Speaker, because I was here for six months before anybody bothered to tell me where it was.

But really, Mr. Speaker, without spending a great deal of time upon this particular matter and without being partisan in any sense, let me say that it has been very rare in the history of this country when any government could honestly say that it was a majority government. I will not quote statistics, because they are available to anybody who wants to look them up and it would suggest that I was being partisan. The fact of the matter is that in a great majority of cases members are in the House with less than half of the citizens in their constituencies voting for them. Therefore, I thoroughly agree—and perhaps it is a terrible piece of presumption on my part to agree with Winston Churchill, but I see from the statistics that he was so right—with Winston Churchill when he said that democracy is the worst possible form of government except for all of the others.

There is a lesson in this for us, surely, in recognizing that there is a difference between what happened in the democratic electoral process, with which of course I am in full agreement, and how we act during the electoral process and how we act once we become members of the House, because in the House, constitutionally and in every other respect indeed, there are no parties, and when people talk about about power, when people talk about the acquisition or the relinquishing of power and they talk about it in the penny-ante sense of whether half a dozen or more people move from one side of the House to the other, what they are doing is playing the kind of games which in fact the press, the media and the public have come to recognize as being one of the faults of our whole parliamentary system because we are incapable of rising above them. This has been evident in the last two or three days in the House.

Mr. Graftey: But you have been in power for a whole generation and a half.

Mr. Jamieson: I do not particularly care whether or not my friend thinks of it in terms of a generation and a half. All I am saying is that we have a multiparty system with which we are prepared to carry on.

Mr. Graftey: Poppycock!

Mr. Jamieson: So the hon. member opposite is becoming highly indignant. He has had his chance. What I am saying is that when one talks in terms of who should exercise power in this country, the answer surely has to be that it is the people of this country; and it is the people of this