

*The Address—Mr. Jamieson*

those whose lives are being affected by various government decisions and the like, this process works even better. It has been my experience that if we talk to the fishermen, for example, it is pointless to expect them in the first instance to do anything other than look for an immediate solution to their difficulties. But when they are invited to talk over the subject they are far more capable than most, in the majority of cases, of appreciating what are the root causes of their difficulties and of accepting recommendations which in many instances were initiated by themselves or by their representatives.

In order to conduct this process, in order to involve fishermen, farmers, students or any other group in our society, it is necessary for them to be in possession of the facts. It seems to me that we in this House must devise a better program to provide a more plentiful flow of information, and more meaningful information to the people. Over the years—and I am not attributing responsibility for this to any one government or party—a tremendous amount of unnecessary secrecy has developed in connection with the business of government. It seems to me, we have done this: Somewhere, way back, we started from the assumption that everything was secret and that only the minimum information possible should be released. Surely a far better and more democratic approach would be to proceed on the assumption that everything is open, and only to withhold information from the general public when this is clearly necessary on the grounds of public interest or for security reasons.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Let us begin today.

**Mr. Jamieson:** It is the intention of the government this session to examine the whole question of information policy to see whether we can find some means by which we can meet some of the legitimate objections which are now raised, both by members opposite and by members of the general public, by removing unnecessary restrictions on the flow of information to the Canadian people. I would assume that one of the considerations which has always caused governments to move warily in this field is concern about the possible charge of propagandizing. However, I do not believe it is beyond the competence of this House to devise a system of safeguards to prevent that kind of thing happening. In any event, the government is prepared to try, and I hope we should receive the wholehearted co-operation of all parties, not only because a

freer flow of information would result but because it would help to eliminate a greater amount of the mumbo-jumbo which accompanies the information that does reach the general public. Much of it is unintelligible, confused and complex.

• (3.50 p.m.)

I realize more than most that it is terribly important not only that we make more information available but that it be better information in the sense of its understandability. Of course, the mere provision of information in this way is not of itself any assurance that we will achieve a more viable democracy or a greater degree of the participation that I think we all agree is desirable. A good deal will depend on the public; an enormous amount will depend on our mass media.

Hon. members know of my own background and profession; therefore, I think I can say with perhaps a little more confidence than most that I understand the problems of the ladies and gentlemen who occupy our press gallery and of those throughout the country who are charged with responsibility for the media. They have a tremendously complex job to do. Despite the fact that there is sometimes a general level of irritation among people in public life, on balance I am prepared to defend the proposition that Canadians are served better by their mass media, taken in the round, than people in most other countries. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I know from personal associations and friendships that there still is within our whole media complex a good deal of inadequacy. No one recognizes this more than most responsible members of the media and those who are charged with the responsibility for their direction.

I am not sure how one approaches this problem, because the pressures on the media are enormous. In the first instance, there is now an incredible flow of news and information. As I said a moment ago, despite the fact that there is not as much information of importance as there should be from government sources, there is an almost limitless amount of information pouring out from all manner of sources.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Does the minister agree that there is a tendency to give capsule news?

**Mr. Jamieson:** There is, Mr. Speaker, and I was about to come to that. In the second place, there is a broad spectrum of issues with which the media may deal. Thirdly, and