

know what an honour and a milestone it is in the history and life of any parliamentarian.

In the last few hours I have re-read the Speech from the Throne, and I have read or heard most of the comments that have been uttered in this debate during the last eight days. Having done so, I can sympathize with the point of view once expressed by Winston Churchill when he said that democracy is the worst possible form of government except for all the others.

The exercise of looking at what I might describe as the total package of the so-called Throne Speech debate is also useful in that it gives one a better understanding of what a growing number of people, particularly young people, are beginning to question more and more; that is, the relevancy of this institution. They are beginning to say more frequently and with more conviction that, to use the modern expression, this simply is not where the action is.

The fact is that when one looks at the totality—I am saying this in an objective way—we have not in fact had a debate at all, in the strict sense of the word. Certain members have said during this debate, with a measure of truth, that it does provide an opportunity for individual members to speak on behalf of their constituencies or, indeed, to talk on any topic of their choosing. But the end result of that, when one looks at it in its total context, is that it is simply not worth it—which might be the conclusion of a group of students if, let us say, they were to examine this debate as an essay assignment or something of that sort.

Indeed, when I read the total package I came to the conclusion that this whole process is now rather an anachronism. It is true that it is sanctified by tradition and that there are certain aspects of it, as I have said, that members regard as being tremendously important. But in terms of communicating additional knowledge about the affairs of this country to the public or even, indeed, to members of the House, I would have to say that the exercise has not been much of a success.

I think the best example I can put forward is the fact that when one analyses literally the total contribution to this debate of members of the opposition, one finds that they have not at any time—or perhaps, to be fair, I should say with very few exceptions—come to grips in any realistic way with the many issues raised in the Throne Speech, some of them contentious and some controversial. The fact is that these issues have been glanced over, if indeed touched upon at all, and we have fallen back almost totally on what might be described as confrontation politics. In a sense, the whole objective seems to be to smite the government hip and thigh.

• (2040)

There is no better example of this than the speech of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield). I read it in full again this afternoon. I find it takes up eight pages in *Hansard*. Of those eight, six and a half pass before the Leader of the Opposition even gets around to indicating what kind of policies his party might pursue in the event of their gaining responsibility for government. But he even deals with that question in a most casual and off-handed fashion. There is nothing basically wrong with this, Mr. Speaker: it is fair ball, fair game. It is a form of political activity, or political strategy if you like. It is

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probably as old as the parliamentary system: it is based on the assumption that governments don't get elected, but simply that other governments get defeated.

I can imagine the Leader of the Opposition and his advisers and speech-writers sitting down and saying, "What we should do now is create a compendium of all the discontents, real and imagined, in this country at the present time. We have to indicate that we are on the proper side of each one of them. We have to get in that bit about old age pensions; and don't forget about the native peoples. And whatever you do, don't leave out that long-standing commitment about the small, family-held farm. Wrap these all up in a bundle and then fall back on your most imaginative writer for a few, hopefully, humorous one-liners. Then stretch out the paragraphs in the most tortuous way you can so that you eventually get to some kind of punchline."

That is in fact what the first six pages or more of the speech of the Leader of the Opposition reflect. He has an absolute right to do this and it is a quite appropriate stance for him to take, to smite the government hip and thigh. But I say to him and to hon. members opposite that it is rather naïve of them to expect that the public will accept as an alternative to the government a party which simply does not put forward alternatives and does not get down to arguing the basic and very important issues which are not only stated in the Throne Speech but are so obvious to all of us in this House.

As a member of the government, when listening to the Leader of the Opposition I felt a kinship with the two sailors who, after a very rough Saturday night, found themselves compelled to go to church parade on Sunday. They went, and discovered that the sermon was on the Ten Commandments. It was a real old-fashioned, hell-fire and brimstone sermon admonishing people as to what would happen to them if they broke the Ten Commandments. The two sailors listened silently; then as they emerged from church one turned to the other and said, "At least we haven't made any graven images." Time after time the Leader of the Opposition has come forward and said that the government has done absolutely nothing right. I would remind him that even a stopped clock is right twice a day.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, as I read the speech of the Leader of the Opposition I began to wonder what would happen if in fact positions were reversed and we had the speech of the Leader of the Opposition as the Throne Speech.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jamieson: Let us look at what the position would be if in fact we had the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, delivered in this House, as the document that was read by His Excellency the Governor General. What would we find in it with regard to policy? What would we find in it with regard to plans, alternatives and options that the opposition—which then, of course, would be the policy formulating body—would undertake? First of all we would have this: