

*The Address—Mr. Thompson*

should be divided as nearly as possible on a proportionate basis.

• (12:30 p.m.)

The issue brought up last night was whether a party has the right at this particular time to express its policies before the general participation in the debate by members takes place. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it is our policy to recognize that more equitable distribution of speaking time in general debate is desirable. That was not the issue last night. The issue last night had to do with the privilege of the leaders of the parties to express party policy as it relates in this particular instance to the throne speech.

I think we might take a lesson from the mother of parliaments in Westminster. At the present time the Liberal party has very few members in that parliament and yet certain rights are extended to the members of that party which are part of the right of expression inherent in parliament. We could take Australia where since the end of the second world war there has been a multiparty parliament. In many ways the Australian parliament has recognized and has made sure that the rights of parliament are maintained under this particular situation which apparently reflects the will of the Australian people, as does also this parliament, the will of the Canadian people because the last three parliaments in Canada have been minority parliaments.

It was my privilege, Mr. Speaker, in our first minority parliament to give to it the name of the house of minorities. I think it is imperative that we strengthen and make more effective its operation as a minority parliament than we have in the past in order that we may be assured that the objectives and the purposes of parliament will be maintained. Therefore, I join with the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) in the remarks he has made in regard to the basic importance of parliament in the democratic process and in regard to our responsibilities to preserve parliament and to preserve those rights that we enjoy in whatever party we are in this house of minorities.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would say that any product, any service, any idea will only live or die according to public opinion. Basically, what I am concerned with is that at present parliament is held in lower esteem by the public, as I interpret the situation, than it has been held for a long time. I fear that if we continue to give the impression that we have been giving to the public and if we continue to behave as we have in the last

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two parliaments, public opinion will sink to such a low ebb that parliament ultimately will be rejected by the public. This is not because there is anything wrong with parliament in itself. I do not think for a moment that it will happen; but if it should happen it will be only because we in parliament have failed in our own responsibilities. It is we, the members of parliament, who are at fault and we are failing the heritage of our parliamentary government, which is the most important heritage that has been passed on to us by British tradition. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I say at this point that it is imperative that we who are members of this house of minorities, who are members of this parliament, make sure that parliament does function effectively and that the esteem and respect and worth of parliament be made clear to the Canadian people whose servants, after all, we are.

We have just gone through an unnecessary election. It was, as has been said over and over again, an exercise in futility. Before the last election was called many of us in the twenty sixth parliament pleaded that the Prime Minister not call an election. He did not heed this advice but accepted rather the words of wisdom of those who, for reasons of political gain or expediency, thought that it was the proper action to take. To the bitter sorrow and chagrin of those advisers and of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), nothing has been gained. What is our alternative now? I maintain that there is only one alternative. As I have already said, we must assure the public and we must assure ourselves that this, the twenty seventh parliament, is going to be a worth-while parliament, that it will be a parliament that will do the job that we who make it up were elected to do.

An election in the immediate future is out of the question, not because I have any fear of another election, which is not the issue at all, but because we must settle down to do the job for which we were elected. I am convinced that this is almost the unanimous voice of the public. If this be true, what are we going to do? Are we to continue playing a hypocritical game of charades where we pretend to do something which we have no intention of doing? Any votes of non-confidence at this particular time intended to overthrow the government are phony motions because that is not really what they are intended to do. They are hypocritical and deceiving. This is apart from any breakdown in the morality of the government or any