

*The Address—Mr. Drew*

**Mr. Drew:** If any government feels safe in the conviction that whatever it does it will receive the support of its party followers, then our parliamentary system stands in very real jeopardy.

The issue placed before the house by the conduct of this government is an issue which is being drawn clearly throughout the world today. If any hon. members are unaware of a place in which they can find an excellent discussion of this very point, I would commend to them the speech of one of the candidates for the Liberal leadership a year ago last summer. The issue placed before this house was stated then, and it is one which has been emerging more clearly all the time. It has been simply stated, perhaps too simply to be sufficiently impressed on many minds, by one of the greatest modern students of democracy, Sir Norman Angell, in these words:

The Russian view is that the power of a government should be used to repress heretical objections to the true doctrine; to forbid political oppositions, even in its satellite states.

The western view is rather that the function of power in a free society is the precise opposite: To ensure the right of political opposition, the right of access to the facts upon which governments base their policy, the right to discuss those facts and to oppose the conclusions drawn by the government.

In that simple statement the emphasis is placed, as it is throughout the excellent book from which the quotation comes, upon the importance of access to all the essential facts by the representatives of the people, as well as the importance of all essential facts being voluntarily furnished. It is obvious that those who are not within the secret confidence of the government cannot be in a position to know all the facts that come to the government from its many agencies.

To some people, this quotation from Sir Norman Angell's description of the problem of modern democracy may seem an oversimplification. To some it may not seem that the issue can be so simplified. There are many stopping places between those two points. But these are the two distinct and opposite points of view. On one side is government, which, having attained power, seeks to limit the opportunity of free discussion, either by preventing criticism or by suppression of the facts. The other is government which insists upon the right of the people's representatives to all the facts, and the right of those representatives to discuss those facts with complete freedom, so that decisions may be made with the full advantage of all the advice that can be gained from the representatives of all the people with the special knowledge of the particular parts of the country from which they come.

[Mr. Cote (Matapedia-Matane).]

While there are many intermediate points between the two, those who steer their course away from the widest interpretation of the meaning of democracy are challenging democracy itself, no matter what they declare to be their purpose or what they say their belief really is. What it is so essential for us to remember is that the vote at the ballot box is not the proof of democracy, and that the presence of members here in this house is not the proof of democracy. There are ballot boxes in Russia, in Hungary, in Germany, in Czechoslovakia, and in all the countries today under the domination of the cruelest form of dictatorship the world has yet known. There undoubtedly will be ballot boxes throughout the whole of China, and a vote will be taken which will probably be close to a one hundred per cent vote, when communists will be returned with great acclaim in every polling subdivision. No, the ballot is not the proof. It is what the voters know about the issues, and it is what the voters know about the things that are before the people for consideration. Then, having made their choice—

**An hon. Member:** They did.

**Mr. Drew:** Yes, they did; and this government will in due course be answerable for what the people did not know. You have the members sitting here in this house, and those who sit here are displaying limited knowledge of the machinery of democracy if they laugh at the suggestion that it is important that the members know what the facts are. Unless and until the members of this house, of all parties, assert their supremacy over the executive by their vote in this house; until they tell this government that it has no right to decide which laws it will observe and which it will not; until they tell this government that the laws passed by this parliament are the laws of the land to be observed, first of all and not last of all, by the government; until the members of this house, and particularly the members who belong to the party from which the government is drawn, assert their voice—until then, our own parliamentary system will continue under an ever-darkening cloud.

With a return to responsible government, and with the supremacy of parliament restored, we can look with confidence to the future. Wider opportunities are available to this country than were ever open to our vision in the past. The great oil developments of the west and the iron developments of the east are merely an indication of the vast expansion which lies before us. But we shall only be able to do the job we were chosen to do as representatives of the people of Canada if we insist upon receiving, and