will show the confidence hon. members are prepared to extend to or withhold from the government.

At no time in the life of this parliament was it more important that the debate on the address should proceed without interruption until it was established whether or not the government held the confidence of the house. Hon. members opposite seem to forget that, technically at least, there has been a change of government with the change of prime ministers, that there has been a change in portfolios, though in most cases the same ministers were reappointed. It is in that sense a different government; and it has not established in any particular that it possesses the confidence of the house.

Perhaps I should not have been amazed, but I must confess to some degree of surprise that the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar (Mr. Coldwell) should have submitted so weakly this afternoon in the face of the government's steam roller. That is evidence of an altogether too friendly association between Liberal members and the C.C.F. party in this house. If that is to be an example of the way in which that group is to function in opposition, then I suggest it come out in its true colours and proclaim itself as simply a wing of the government party. If we are to have a continuation of that attitude the criticism of government policy we may expect from the C.C.F. party during this session will be a very friendly, mild and ladylike kind of criticism.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there has been an attempt on the other side to ridicule the importance of this debate. The reason is perfectly obvious, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the debate on the address gives the members of the opposition, yes, and such other private members of the house as choose to assert their freedom and responsibility as members of the house, an opportunity to stand in their places and criticize the government on its past record, on its policy, on the contents of the speech from the throne, and on the omissions from it. Not only is this a duty; it is a responsibility which every member of the house must exercise according to his rights if he would do his duty by those whom he represents.

Necessarily, any government characterized by such flaws in its record affords very great opportunity for criticism. If this debate is not throttled, or sidetracked by the government steam roller, there will be plenty of criticism of the government in this chamber during the course of this debate. Is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that a government which has shown itself so impatient of criticism would desire in this way to throttle criticism? That is precisely the issue which is before the house today. Shall criticism have a free voice in a free parliament? It is that issue that will be determined in the vote on this resolution today.

This resolution means precisely what it says. It signifies that the government is not prepared to permit parliament, in the ordinary way, to proceed in freedom to express criticism of government policy. The reason becomes all the more obvious in the light of what has been said of late—supposedly emanating from government circles or sources close to the government, and referred to by my esteemed leader— about the possibility of a general election. What could better suit the purposes of a government, such as the one in office today, than, on the eve of an election, to throttle criticism in this house, and this at a time when much criticism is being heard from the people of this country. That is the measure of the government's sense of responsibility to those to whom it owes responsibility, that, at this above all times, it should seek to stifle criticism.

In this house the day before yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we went through a form which is followed on the opening day in every parliament which stems from the mother of parliaments. In the measure which has been traditionally introduced respecting the administration of the oaths of office, the house asserts its right to proceed with business of its choosing without first having to take up the program laid down before it in the speech from the throne. Is that an empty formality? Is it simply a reminder that in days gone by a free parliament found itself at odds with a monarch?

It goes a good deal further than that, Mr. Speaker. It amounts to the assertion, if this house has the courage to assert what it should, of the right of the house to proceed with its business in the proper way. In this instance no business can be taken up, if that constitutional position is to be preserved, until the government has established that it possesses the confidence of the house.

The same old mentality dominates this government as dominated the one which it succeeded last fall. There is the same old complex; the same old bureaucratic approach to all of these problems; the same contempt for parliament; the same irresponsibility in its attitude towards the elected representatives of the people in this house. If this is a new government, Mr. Speaker, it has learned its constitutional practice from the government which preceded it, and that was a poor way to learn sound constitutional practice. It was a very good way to learn oligarchic practice.