

ing any modification in our parliamentary system may, to some minds, smack of irreverence or lack of appreciation of our British constitutional system. But let me hasten to say that it is really out of the profoundest respect for the best spirit of our British system of government that I am going to put forward my proposal.

The greatness of the British constitution, it may be said, lies in the fact that it is not fixed; that is, it possesses the elasticity of life. It has that most necessary quality, adaptation; and it has always in the past been able to accommodate itself to the changes that have taken place in industrial life. It is not, of course, like the American constitution, which is more or less fixed. That constitution is very much in the nature of a political yardstick. It is brought out from time to time, and the people are virtually told: you must not cut off more, or less, political cloth than you were told to do by Washington. The British constitution as it has been well described by someone, is a constant progress "from precedent to precedent." We shall not therefore find ourselves violating the great principle of the British constitution in seeking to secure modifications of our present parliamentary system to accommodate changes in our own political life. Someone—I believe it was one of our lady politicians in Canada, not, by the way, the lady member of this House (Miss Macphail)—has asked the question, what has made Great Britain great? In answer to her own question she said practically this: In every great crisis of the nation's history, Great Britain has always possessed men of sufficient vision and sufficient courage to see coming changes and to make them before revolt forced the issue; and in that, she said, is to be found Britain's greatness. Now, every system, whether of government or of economics, has sprung from some fundamental human need; but we know also that systems which at one time possessed qualities of great value and which have served well in the past, through generations have become an actual hindrance to progress. Sometimes institutions have got so much out of touch with actual life that they stand in the way. If therefore systems and institutions spring from fundamental human needs, we must recognize that such needs are the paramount things to be considered, and that no system at any time must take precedence to human interest. Systems have been made by men for men, and this

boasted system of ours was also made by men to meet human needs; and there is no good reason why we should not make it better if we can, or modify it so as to suit our own purposes and serve our own time better than it is capable of doing as at present constituted. Systems that have continued after having ceased to be of the greatest usefulness have the tendency to mould men after their cast-iron fashion rather than to recognize the principle that men should modify systems. And that, by the way, seems to me to be just about what this Government wants to do. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has said on the floor of the House that he had made an offer to the Progressives that they should have an opportunity, if they desired it, of securing representation in the Government; but he added the proviso that this must be upon the condition that they should cease to be Progressives, and become Liberals, whatever that might mean. That is exactly what I am complaining about: it is a system seeking to modify the representatives of the House to its regulations, rather than recognizing the right of representatives to modify the system to suit themselves.

There is the difference; the Government like any other institution, must be a developing organism, inasmuch as we happen to be a developing people—humanity itself is a developing organism, if we may consider it as a unit. Therefore, this Government must keep pace with the people which it seeks to serve, and it must be prepared to meet with the ever-increasing complications of our industrial system. Look for a moment at the principle of development. That principle has been stated for us most admirably by Herbert Spencer in his "First Principles." You remember how he traces for us the trail of that principle as it goes through, first of all, the material universe. He takes us through that universe from the time when it was a whirling orb of fire in space to the time when it began to sustain living organisms, and on to the highest achievements of man in art and in social institutions. And the principle which goes through all those processes and systems is this—a movement from the simpler to the complex and from the indefinite to the definite.

In that connection, Mr. Speaker, to show that we are in harmony with the very principle of development itself, I would draw the attention of hon. members to the complicated political situation which we have