

all want Parliament to be more effective. However, there is a danger that we get so tied up in details that we lose sight of the fundamentals. That is why I should like to take a few minutes to consider the real problem of parliamentary reform. Obviously, parliamentary reform involves Parliament. And we often tend to forget what Parliament actually is, when we stress any of Parliament's specific roles or functions, give our own perspective, and support a measure because it reflects a specific concept or definition of the parliamentary system.

What are Parliament's roles? It is perhaps useful to recall them at this point. There is a legislative role, of course, and a budgetary role, because Parliament must approve the estimates tabled by the government, enabling government to administer programs implementing the legislation approved by Parliament itself. In addition to these two roles, Parliament has a normative function which I do not think is being questioned here. Every day the House sits, members have an opportunity to hold the minister accountable for his actions and thus provide the assurance to the public that the country is being governed according to acceptable standards.

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We must not forget, however, that in addition to these two roles and this function, there is also the basic premise underlying the functions of Parliament, and that is the principle of responsible government. We could have endless and probably futile discussions on the merits of stricter separation between the executive and the legislative function than what we have in our own system. In any case, our system is patterned on the British parliamentary system which combines the legislative and the executive functions within the same institution. It is not necessarily a bad thing, since as a result, we have a healthy give-and-take which is usually creative and in the final instance makes it possible for the two orders to live together and act as a mutual stimulus. But it is a very real constraint.

We must not forget that when we discuss parliamentary reform, we cannot make a mental reservation and ignore the fact that in our system we have the principle of responsible government. I shall come back later to the proposal made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) which I took upon myself to applaud and which referred, in the context of party politics, to giving greater freedom to parliamentarians when they have to approve legislation introduced by the government. On the basis of this constraint, which is absolute, we have imposed upon ourselves a number of relative constraints which have developed throughout the years because of tradition, as a result of rulings made by successive speakers during the 700 years of existence of Westminster and since the beginnings of confederation in Canada, and of our Standing Orders, which is the final analysis are a consolidation of these rules that we have ourselves established and which help us fulfil our duty as parliamentarians in view of a certain balance between the opposing forces. When I speak of opposing forces, I do not mean simply bilateral, but also multilateral forces because we

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have on one hand government forces and opposition forces, and on the other hand the forces of members of Parliament in their legislative capacity and the forces of the executive and its overriding importance confirmed by tradition and regulations. In other words, this creates a certain balance of power which has brought us to this point and which the crisis of the last two weeks forces us to review, because balance implies self-discipline and implies most of all, since we live in a democracy, that everyone involved must accept the rules of the game and that the balance of power must be reviewed when they are no longer accepted.

Yet, I am afraid that for certain people, parliamentary reform means simply functional arrangements within this traditional balance of power without involving any review of the balance of power itself. This brings about a contradiction, a paradox which, in my opinion, will be difficult to correct and which may have prevented any real parliamentary reform until now. Several attempts have been made since I came to this House in 1974. I sat on the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization with the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and other members, including the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau). This committee examined three very specific and well-defined issues which were of concern to parliamentarians at the time, namely, the role of Members of Parliament in introducing legislation itself, in other words, what are erroneously called private bills and are finally public bills introduced by private members, time allocation and committee work.

Therefore, I fear that if we look simply for new arrangements, we shall be faced with an impossible paradox, on one hand a government which quite legitimately wishes to introduce legislation and deal with government business with as few obstacles as possible, which is quite normal, and on the other hand, and completely opposed to this legitimate desire of the government to play its role, the also quite legitimate desire of parliamentarians to play a concrete, positive and constructive role in the affairs of the country in this House, which means discussing bills and estimates submitted by the government. How can this paradox be resolved? The one who can resolve it should perhaps be beatified or decorated with the Order of Canada or something else, but by resolving this paradox, we would finally be giving a true meaning to this institution. Without necessarily solving it once and for all, and it should perhaps remain unsolved, because there would no longer be this creative tension between the two orders of government and we would no longer have, at least as we know them now, the British parliamentary system and responsible government, which are the foundations of our government, we should perhaps, just the same, seek a new balance.

As I said, we could all make suggestions based on our own experience. It is true that we are probably all rather frustrated by the inconsistencies of this institution, its really antiquated aspect, its obsolete mechanisms that require us to go through