

*Procedure and Organization*

who analyzed the parliamentary institutions of his own land, Britain. So shrewdly did he perceive and so succinctly did he record that his writings have become a classic, if not the classic, dissertation on the British parliamentary system. As my colleague from Halifax-East Hants said in the house the other night, John Stuart Mill was a man of tremendous intellect and prestige, and a giant in parliament. Unfortunately, as my hon. friend said, John Stuart Mill has been relegated if not forgotten by many who should cherish his views. On the other hand what Bagehot had to say is still read. While his style may be quaint, and the political society in which he moved vastly different from ours, he is as contemporary today as the best efforts of our modern editors. I wish to read Bagehot's comments about the House of Commons in Britain. He said:

The House of Commons needs to be impressive, and impressive it is: but its use resides not in its appearance, but in its reality. Its office is not to win power by awing mankind, but to use power in governing mankind.

He went on to say:

The second function of the House of Commons is what I may call an expressive function. It is its office to express the mind of the English people on all matters which come before it—

The third function of Parliament is what I may call—preserving a sort of technicality even in familiar matters for the sake of distinctness—the teaching function. A great and open council of considerable men cannot be placed in the middle of a society without altering that society. It ought to alter it for the better. It ought to teach the nation what it does not know.

And no teacher can teach when he is gagged, Mr. Speaker. No one can teach when freedom to do so is denied to him. Then he went on to say that the fourth function of the house was to enable the government to legislate. My hon. friend from Malpeque (Mr. MacLean) touched on this matter the other night. This house is not a bill passing machine, Mr. Speaker. This is a great, deliberative assembly and it can be great only if it is free.

One of Canada's great men in the field of political science, a man at whose feet many of us worshipped, as we began our studies, MacGregor Dawson, had something worth-while to say when he looked at our Canadian institutions. Some of the things he had to say are worth saying again. He said this:

The House of Commons is the great democratic agency in the government of Canada; the "grand inquest of the nation"; the organized medium through which the public will finds expression and exercises its ultimate political power. It forms the

indispensable part of the legislature; and it is the body to which at all times the executive must turn for justification and approval.

If I may interpolate, it is not the other way round. I continue:

The fundamental importance of the House of Commons is thus derived from its essential representative character, the fact that it can speak, as no other body in the democracy can pretend to speak, for the people. It presents in condensed form the different interests, races, religions, classes, and occupations, whose ideas and wishes it embodies with approximate exactness. It serves as the people's forum and the highest political tribunal; it is, to use Mill's phrase, "the nation's committee of grievances and its congress of opinions." One of its greatest merits is derived from the fact that it is not a selection of the ablest or most brilliant men in the country, but rather a sampling of the best of an average run, an assembly of diverse types and varied experience, the members of which are genuinely and actively concerned with the promotion of the national welfare as they see it. No Cabinet which keeps in constant touch with this body can be very far removed from fluctuations in public opinion, for the House is always acting as an interpreter and forcing this opinion on the attention of its leaders; conversely, a Cabinet which grows out of touch with the Commons is courting disaster.

He goes on to say:

The companion function of the Commons and one which can scarcely be separated from the first is that of educating and leading public opinion on many questions. The House is much more than a mere mouthpiece to repeat and advertise the views of the constituencies. It will, of course, do that to a large extent, but it will also discuss many questions on which the voters have as yet no certain convictions or on which they may need further information and guidance. The House will talk, argue, investigate, oppose, decide, and frequently postpone action on many matters, and in doing these things it arouses interest and helps to create a more enlightened opinion throughout the country.

Can it do that under rule 75c, Mr. Speaker? I say it cannot. Dare we, sir, if we take our duty seriously, forget the imperishable truths which Walter Bagehot and Dawson set forth so cogently? Can we assume that an institution so precious, so delicately balanced, and with such immense demands upon it can sustain the assaults of those who see only narrow administrative or partisan aims or goals?

While the House of Commons or any dynamic parliamentary body is of course a proper arena for debate, vigorous controversy and sharp conflicts of opinion, there must be values which are above and beyond the clash and clamour of partisan conflict. The rights of hon. members and the place, honour and role of the institution itself are in this category. These things belong to parliament—not to the