

ment action. Because it is the government which formulates policy and pilots it through the House, credit for success and blame for failure goes to the government. Moreover, governments seek office on the basis of a program of action, and once in office are expected to put that program into effect.

If a situation were created in which a government could find itself defeated again and again on major pieces of legislation and yet be forced to continue in office, as is sometimes the case with the United States president who is elected for a set term, our system of responsible government would be adversely affected if not entirely destroyed. Thus, I feel it necessary to suggest that a government be permitted to say of any piece of legislation, before debate on it begins, "This piece of legislation, or this portion of the bill before us is a matter of principle to us. If it suffers defeat, we will consider the defeat to be a vote of want of confidence and an election will be called even if the four-year term is not up." This latter qualification is obviously a major one, one which if abused, could severely reduce the advantages of a set-term parliament.

It is obviously possible, with this sort of exception available, for a government to make such a statement about every piece of legislation it brought forward and thus end the possibility of free votes. However, the likelihood of such action being taken is remote since institutions and laws have their own dynamics. Once the law made it possible for more free votes to take place, the expectation of the public would be that they take place and a government would ignore such expectations at its peril. I think that initially governments would use such a qualification very frequently but, as the system was demonstrated to work and as the public became accustomed to it, the use of such a rider on legislation would become less and less frequent.

I submit that these kinds of reform are necessary because they give greater weight to the individual Member of Parliament. At the moment parliament, except in a minority government situation, is lead around by the nose by members of cabinet, and especially the Prime Minister. So long as individual Members of Parliament are effectively excluded from having a reasonable amount of influence over policy formation and over the business which comes before the House, their constituents, individually and collectively, are similarly denied an influence unless they are members of well organized, well financed special interest groups capable of gaining the attention and affecting the judgment of the cabinet. That is not democracy; rather, it is a form of collective plutocracy.

In the interests of democracy, in the interests of making this chamber relevant to the people of Canada, we need to build into the system the necessity for a government to consult meaningfully with this House and its members when it occupies a majority position as well as during those times when there is government by minority. I suggest that in a small way a fixed-term parliament would assist in achieving that end.

**Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to represent the constituency of York-Sunbury that has been represented by such great Canadians as J. Chester MacRae, the Hon. Milton F.

*The Address—Mr. Howie*

Gregg, the Hon. R. B. Hanson, W. G. Clark and the Hon. Francis Bridges.

I would respectfully commend you, Mr. Speaker, on the fair, impartial and friendly way you conduct yourself in the performance of your exacting duties. You certainly merit your excellent reputation which extends across Canada. I wish also to commend the clerks at the table who serve this House with distinction. The Clerk of the Commons has been the instigator and mainstay of the organization of Clerks of all legislatures in Canada. The Clerks hold annual seminars, exchange information and improve the quality of service to all legislators in Canada. Our Clerk, the Clerk Assistants and parliamentary counsel have merited the praise and respect of all hon. members for their service to this House and to all the legislative bodies in Canada.

My constituency is one of the most beautiful in Canada. Intersected by the magnificent Saint John River, its rolling hills and green valleys are punctuated by evergreen forests, farms, towns, villages and the capital city of New Brunswick. Base Gagetown, the large army training area, the dominion research station, factories, government offices, recreation areas, the arts and points of historic and natural interest are all there. There is also poverty, hardship, anguish and frustration. I shall in a moment, Sir, ask your understanding and assistance in identifying and attempting to solve the difficult problems facing many people in my constituency.

The provincial university, the University of New Brunswick, Teacher's College and St. Thomas University, are located in my constituency on the same campus. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) and the former minister of transport all know this campus. They visited it during the election campaign. They are always welcome in York-Sunbury and I hope they return soon.

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York-Sunbury also has within its boundaries the capital of the province of New Brunswick. Fredericton is the only capital city in Canada not served by rail passenger service. To visit Fredericton by rail you disembark at Fredericton junction and then travel over icy roads in a bus through the bitter cold New Brunswick winter for a considerable distance. It is not equal to the comfortable, safe rail service that helped develop and build part of this area. If you come by air, make your reservations early if you plan to visit during the busy season. Would you believe that last week I was on the waiting list to fly from Montreal to Fredericton on March 24? You have probably guessed by now why I welcome the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), particularly in the winter when I hope he comes by train.

I am vitally interested in the government's future plans for regional economic development. The disparity that exists between the Atlantic provinces and the rest of Canada has remained constant despite strong efforts made by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. One can only conclude that without DREE the situation may have been much worse but that some important studied changes are necessary. Unfortunately, neither the throne speech nor the speech of the Minister of Regional