

the committee system, it takes a much opposing point of view as to the disruptive nature or effect that it should have on the government's legislative program. If one wanted to take a lot of time, this argument leads us down the path to the whole question of time allocation, not only in the chamber itself but in the committees, which is another subject all of us would like to debate at some length and which will continually raise its head as we study the committee system, particularly in its legislative functioning.

One can carry on the conflict by examining the desires of the cabinet on the one hand and of the backbenchers on the other, even of the backbenchers within the government party. Indeed, there is the desire of the minister responsible for legislation that his legislation pass as smoothly as possible. That is well understood. And there is the desire, even of government backbenchers, that if they have not managed, as so frequently happens, to get a real piece of the action in the House they be entitled to become extremely active and aggressive in the committees. Accordingly, the committees provide an excellent opportunity for those who have not had an opportunity to contribute formally to House debates on legislation to get into action in the committees, and not only make recommendations but propose and make amendments. Again, there is a serious conflict over whether it is much more important for the government to accommodate the views of all those who want to participate in debate or to get on with the legislative program that it has introduced to serve the country.

However, perhaps the most interesting conflict of all is between theorists who endorse the parliamentary system as we know it and those who endorse the congressional system, or a more congressional system than we have here. In this context I do not want, as many people do, to see the word "congressional" used as a synonym for anything that is American because there is, of course, a great deal more to a congressional approach to our work here than simply an imitation of what takes place in the United States. But let us assume that which tends to compartmentalize the legislative function and that which tends to create the separate bodies of the legislative organization and set them up independently with statutory authority of their own, which is the more congressional of the two systems, as opposed to the parliamentary system as we know it, where cabinet responsibility extends throughout the system.

The cornerstone of the parliamentary system is that the cabinet, as the executive, must remain responsible to Parliament and to the country at all times for its decisions and actions. It can be accepted, therefore, as an ingrained attitude of the executive that it tends to guard, sometimes to ridiculous lengths, the sanctity of its legislation in committee, which is explained away by virtue of the fact that a defeat on a major issue in committee reflects badly on the cabinet.

Let us go to the extreme of indicating that committees should be able to take a totally independent position in this regard but this does not conform to the parliamentary system as we know it, this is a most interesting conflict and, hopefully, may be resolved by a continuing attitude that activities in committee which appear to be detrimental to features of legislation should not be considered by

#### *Suggested Improvements to Committee System*

Parliament to be in the vein of a serious defeat that would prejudicially affect the stability of the government. How does one achieve that kind of spirit without changing the rules to constitute an independent system, which I do not think would be a better system on its own than the system we have now, when one takes into account all the features of the present system?

One can go on to deal with the view of the public as opposed to the view of political scientists. The public does not understand all the technical language that we use here, all the rules and regulations. The public senses that Parliament takes a long time to get things done. The public desires action and wants to know why it is that a bill, once drafted, has to be guarded against change by the cabinet. The public wonders why it is that changes cannot be made. And if independent members have views that they want to put forward, the public wants to know why amendments cannot be made without the result reflecting on the government, possibly leading to its defeat. The public has one interest, an interest in action, the kind of action that the hon. member is seeking through his notice of motion.

The political scientists, on the other hand, recognize that any departure from the rules that set up the parliamentary system, as we know it, can lead us into dangerous areas, can get us away from parliamentary democracy and into some new kind of system, into something requiring a new set of rules and regulations.

Mention was made of the possibility of moving toward the establishment of a panel of chairmen of committees, a feature that would be borrowed from the United Kingdom system. Indeed, much can be said against the current system of carrying a government majority and government chairman on almost all committees. Admittedly, it could be an improvement to see an independent panel of chairmen, perhaps assigned by the Speaker, representing the proportionate strengths in the House of Commons, with individual responsibilities assigned by the Speaker. But, again, how does one compensate for the fact that if the government majority does not carry on a committee, and if the chairman is an opposition chairman—which in many cases could be an excellent feature—a serious defeat of government legislation in committee reflects badly on the government itself and, under our traditional system, may cause its resignation?

• (4:30 p.m.)

These conflicts exist in every aspect of the committee system that one discusses. When one gets into discussion of the functions of the committee as we know it, doing the legislative function primarily and the examination of the estimates—a separate function, again—the question becomes: Can the committee carry on and take that independent step to become a committee of inquiry? I do not mean within the scope of the Inquiries Act, but inquiring into parliamentary business and affairs and, logically following from that, making recommendations that are not initiated by Parliament, that are not an order of reference from Parliament to the committee on a specific aspect but that are of independent origin within the committee itself.

It follows logically, if one supports that view, that the motion for concurrence of such committee reports