

Procedure and Organization

can be described as not only democratic but responsible. The government is responsible for its actions. In the United States they have a system of government in which there is no responsibility when something goes wrong. If there is runaway inflation do you blame the President, the House of Representatives, the Senate or the Judiciary? You can almost blame all three branches equally at times simply because they do not work in concert. When something goes wrong in the Canadian system, the people have a very good idea where they should point the finger namely, at the government in power.

If this is the way our system is to operate, the government must have the power to control the business of the House of Commons because it is responsible to the electors and to the House of Commons. All members of the governing party are members of the House of Commons and they ought to be considered equally with all other members. It is not a question of parties having individual or equal status, but of parties having certain support in the House of Commons and being permitted to go ahead and determine the conduct of business as they see fit according to that support given to each party by the Canadian people.

Mr. Barnett: Will the hon. member permit a further question?

Mr. Reid: Yes.

Mr. Barnett: The hon. member in almost the same breath said that the government should control parliament and then said that the government is responsible to parliament. How does the hon. member reconcile those two statements?

An hon. Member: Because he is a Liberal.

Mr. Reid: The government does two things. The government carries on the administration of the country through the members of the Privy Council. The ministry has members in the house to support it. As long as the ministry has the support of the backbenchers in the party it remains in power if it is, of course, in a majority position. In a minority parliament it depends on the support of a majority of the house. If it loses that support, it goes out of power. I do not see any contradiction in what I said.

On the grounds of responsibility it is far better for the responsibility for the conduct of business of the House of Commons to rest with the government and not with the opposition parties or the minor parties. I think rule

[Mr. Reid.]

75c is a reasonable compromise. I myself think that 75c is not sufficient because it does not go far enough. I would have preferred to see something more along the lines of the British system. I recognize this is an evolving system in Canada. We have not yet come to the state where we can discipline ourselves in order to deal with our workload. Therefore we must approach this over a period of time, taking it step by step.

Most of the reasons for opposition to 75c are not justifiable. I commend rules 75A, 75B and 75c to the house. I suspect that in three, four or five years after 75c is adopted we will be back looking for a much more effective system.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Will the hon. member permit a question? In view of the reference the hon. member made to the nature of our system, will he answer this question? When the people of Canada go to the polls, do they elect a government or a parliament? Perhaps when he is answering that question he might also answer this one: Is the government responsible to parliament or does it go over the head of parliament to the people?

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Reid: That is a very interesting question, Mr. Speaker. I would like to think I was elected to the House of Commons as an individual to represent my constituents. Coming from a rural riding this may perhaps be true, but I rather suspect that the majority of the members here were elected to this house because they belonged to a particular political party with a particular political program. Therefore my answer would be that the majority of the members owe their presence here to a political party with a program. There is another group here because of tradition or who, if you wish, have pocket boroughs, or who came here on individual merit.

I would say we now elect a government and an opposition. I do not think we come here as individuals. I think that once the democratic system or parliamentary system evolved into a mass democracy, and evoked a system in which parties were responsible to the electors, we came here as members of political parties. I suggest to the hon. member that this point is recognized for the first time in proposed Standing Orders 75A, 75B and 75c, and I think the greatest break with tradition is 75A in which we have said that the parties shall have the responsibility for determining the business of the house, and that the mavericks who exist in all parties, and the