

had my glasses I could not read my handwriting. If the hon. member does not mind, I will answer his question later.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, our parliamentary system, as I see it, is based on a party system. I do not think this place could function otherwise. This may not be a good system but, as Winston Churchill said, although it may appear to be the worst of systems, there is no better system because from this Chamber flows all freedom. I suggest that if we carried the hon. member's suggestion to its ultimate conclusion, we would find ourselves in the same position as some of our friends in Europe. For example, in France in the days before de Gaulle there were so many parties that one government after another was defeated in quick succession, which eventually brought about the de Gaulle government. That is why it would be wrong for any member of parliament, who represents his constituency and his province as well as his country, to suggest that we should put a limit on the number of parties, but on the other hand if we had ten or 15 parties represented in this House, it would function even more slowly than it does now.

Now I would like to say a few words about the party structure. It has always amazed me—and I say this in a kindly way—that if a member of the House, or several of them, differ from their party, the media report this as if it were a terrible sin. I say that if we all talked alike, there would be no thinking. In any party structure there must be some differences. The reason there are differences within a party is that we are not all representatives of the same region. Problems in the Maritimes differ from those in Quebec, in the prairies, or on the Pacific coast. The Conservative party is a national party, so are the Liberals, so is the NDP to a lesser extent, and so has the Social Credit party been at times, and members of those parties represent various regions.

I have always been interested in one fact since first coming to the House, and that is that a Liberal member from the prairie provinces often has more in common, in the problems he is trying to solve, with a member from the prairie area in another party than I would have, for instance, with a colleague in my own party from another part of the country. I say it is only natural to be part of the environment from which one comes, and to speak for one's region. Our environment has shaped and trimmed our thinking. Just because one happens to have a different point of view from a colleague in one's party does not mean that there is no unity in the party on a broad scale, whether it is this party, the Liberal party or the NDP.

Too much is made in the press at times of people differing on some issues with their fellow party members. The media report this immediately as a split in the party. If you are all a bunch of trained seals, you are not thinking at all. I am happy when I see someone on the other side vote against his party, and I have never objected to members doing that in my own party. That is their privilege and their right. That is what Eisenhower said about the Republican party. He was talking about a difference of opinion he was having with his party on broad principles.

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I would say that on broad principles members of the Liberal party are in agreement, and the same would be true of our party, of the NDP and of the Social Credit party, but we may disagree sometimes among ourselves on less important issues. Sometimes a person feels deeply and sincerely about a subject, and if he disagrees with the position of his party on this subject he might abstain in a vote rather than become an embarrassment to his party and cause the media to report about a division in that party. If that gets across the country they say to you, "You are fighting among yourselves." I have never held it against anyone who has differed in his opinions from me. In my profession, if that were true we would always be in a fight.

Although I have some sympathy with the viewpoint of the hon. member for Moncton, I cannot accept his position because I think it would encourage, as the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley pointed out, more people to come to the House as Independents. It might be good for their publicity, but I even question if it would be good for their constituency. I myself have gone through eight elections and I know that some people vote for the candidate and other people vote for the party.

My friend, the hon. member for Moncton, said that being a member of parliament has little or nothing to do with political parties. I suggest he is interpreting this institution as if it were a city council or a town council, as the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley said. If that were the method we followed, this place could not function.

This is my suggestion to the hon. member for Moncton. If he feels he is being discriminated against, he should take this matter up with the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, or when an election comes up this spring, if that is when it is to come. It is within the prerogative of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to dissolve this House and to go to the country. He might wait until we increase the membership in this place to 283 when the new boundaries are in effect. That is a decision which the Prime Minister alone must make, or with the help of his advisers, whether they be cabinet advisers, parliamentary advisers or other advisers. However, if the hon. member for Moncton has a year or 18 months left, he should probably take his problem to the committee.

● (1440)

The hon. member is a reasonable man. He realizes that if every member of this House had the right to be on two committees we would be in difficulty. The hon. member never sat in this House as part of a government party like I did when my party had 208 members. With 208 members the whip always has a headache because everybody wants to be on certain committees. For example, our party had many members from western Canadian farm constituencies when we formed the government, and there was room for only 50 or 60 on the Agriculture Committee. Many were denied the right to sit on that committee even though they belonged to a major national party with a large following. With the greatest of