

during the question period, in committee hearings and by making speeches on various subjects in the House of Commons. This could bring back the administration of the country to the House of Commons. My main point is that prime ministers and ministers go outside, into the country, for this healthful reason, and because it is an important form of communication with the electorate. Governments, prime ministers, ministers and backbenchers from all sides like to be re-elected. Any prime minister, minister or backbencher who finds himself losing contact with his constituency is not going to last very long around here. So it is healthful to go back and speak to your people and have them speak to you.

● (1730)

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and other ministers have large constituencies. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has a large constituency for which he speaks. He speaks for the old age pensioners and is recognized as one of their spokesmen, so it is a national constituency for which he speaks. The Prime Minister also has a national constituency, so it is very important for him to travel nationally, making a point of being seen and being available.

The fact that it is interpreted that he is going over the head of this House is an indication that this House is not in tune with what is going on, because if the House of Commons were in tune with what is going on, that charge naturally would not be made.

It is my hope that when we have the opportunity to deal with the placing of television cameras in the House of Commons, and making available the televised record of this House to those who wish to see it, this will mark a change in the approach we as politicians have taken toward the use of television in Canada. I think the existing scrum that takes place after the question period is a disgrace. It would be far better if cameras recorded what goes on in the House of Commons and transmitted it to the people in their homes, so that they could see what takes place in this place as well as anywhere else.

**An hon. Member:** You better be careful because they will see the Cabinet.

**Mr. Reid:** Cabinet ministers often say to me that they never get on television. I think most Cabinet ministers would look with a great deal of anticipation to the opportunity of becoming television stars.

**An hon. Member:** I would rather watch Lassie.

**Mr. Reid:** It may well be that the Cabinet ministers and their families would be the only ones who watched, but at least the opportunity would be given Canadians to see the performance not only of Cabinet ministers but also of members opposite. That is also an important consideration.

The hon. member made reference to the fact that one of the ways in which the government could be kept in check is if we had what he called a competitive electoral system. I tend to disagree with the interpretation he places upon the situation, in that he said we did not have a balanced system. He referred to the province of Quebec and to the

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fact that his party has difficulty in getting seats there. My party has difficulty getting seats in the west. If you take a look at the total of all seats you will find that the two tend to balance off, except that I think we do much better in the west than the hon. member's party does in Quebec.

Surely the reasons for the situation are historical and have to do with the position that political parties have taken on the great issues of our time. They have to do with the way in which these parties are seen as the defenders of their interests. It may very well be that, in a country like Canada with such diversities, it is impossible for any political party to be popular simultaneously in all parts of the country. My feeling would be that if indeed a party could ever be simultaneously popular in all parts of the country either there would be something the matter with the political party or something wrong with the Canadian population. I do not believe it is possible, or that it would be particularly healthful.

I would reiterate the point I made in reply to the hon. member a few minutes ago. I think parties get their strength from the decisions they have taken while in government and in opposition. This is the result of the decisions taken by parties on public issues of the day. We have to take responsibility for the stands and decisions we take, and I think that is the only fair way to go about it.

I do not think the hon. member should say the political system is unbalanced. His party came far too close to winning in 1972, and if the party opposite had fought us as hard as it fought itself during the last federal election its hon. members might well have won and be sitting in these seats. That party did not win. Consequently justice prevailed, and truth is in the ascendant.

I want to deal with the constitutional relationship raised by the hon. member, and the concept of parliamentary democracy versus Cabinet government. It is quite true that we have a system of Cabinet government. It is also true that we have a system of parliamentary legislature. There is a distinction between the two. The job of the government is to govern. It is not our job as legislators to govern but to legislate.

If you were to take a look at the amount of legislation passed through the House of Commons over the last 15 or 20 years you would find quite clearly that the productivity of the Canadian parliament has been declining. This decline in the ability of parliament to cope with changing social situations and the necessity to legislate old legislation into conformity with new situations is one of the reasons why the Canadian parliament has not been highly regarded by the Canadian people in recent years.

The point I want to make is that there is no disharmony between the concepts of Cabinet government and parliamentary democracy. The Cabinet is drawn from the legislature and it is accountable every single day of the week in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister and the ministers are in their seats and questions are asked. In addition there is an unparalleled opportunity, I think unique in our parliamentary system, whereby parliamentary committees have the opportunity to question officials about the administration of legislation.

No longer must we be satisfied with the bland explanations we used to get in the good old days when estimates