

less effectively have Ministers exercised their influence and authority to silence the voice of the majority.

Is it really desirable that Ministers of the Crown should exercise authority over Parliament? Is it not desirable rather that Parliament should exercise authority over Ministers? Is it not an essential principle of parliamentary government that Ministers should be held responsible to Parliament instead of Parliament being held responsible to Ministers?

According to Earl Grey party government has had the happy effect of enabling Ministers to obtain "authority" in the House, and it is carried on for the benefit of Ministers, and in order to enable them to coerce Parliament. And no doubt, in this respect, the system has succeeded admirably. Party government has placed Parliament at the feet of the Ministry of this day. A Ministry, by means of a party vote, may coerce a majority, and thereby exercise authority and openly set the House at defiance.

I contend that it is solely because Ministers exercise their authority that it is so difficult to get any legislation out of Parliament. So far from being of any assistance, in my opinion party government is a positive hindrance to legislative action.

Party warfare is peculiar to parliamentary life—I might almost say to English parliamentary life, for it has not fairly established itself in any non-English speaking races; and even in England itself it has found no place in any other departments of public or private service.

Had government by party not come into existence under exceptional circumstance; had it not been the slow growth of generations; had it not been associated with the names of our most eminent men, and with some of the proudest events of our history, and had almost become a part of our national life, it would find few defenders amongst us at the present day. The system is tolerated because of old associations, and because we have come to think that it is in some way an essential part of our time-honoured Constitution; but if it were now for the first time proposed for our acceptance, I venture to say that it would not recommend itself either to the intelligence or to the moral sense of the community.

When Government by departments was in operation, the heads of departments were controlled by the sovereign; we have not yet had government by departments directly controlled by Parliament; yet this is precisely the kind of government that the Constitution provides for. The functions of Ministers are, or ought to be, simply administrative. Ministers are the Executive Committee of Parliament. It is their duty to carry on the departmental business of government, and nothing more. And there is no more reason to anticipate that the members of a Committee of this kind would meet only to differ and dispute than would any Select Committee of the House appointed for any other purpose. If a Select Committee do not agree, the minority may submit a separate report, setting forth the reasons why they differ from the majority, and when the question submitted to them comes up before the House, the fullest light will be thrown on the whole matter in dispute. There is no reason why Ministers should not follow the same rule.

Government by party necessitates the existence not of one but of two leaders; not of one party, but of two parties; and these two leaders and two parties are supposed to be in direct opposition to each other—an arrangement not conducive to unity of action on the part of the House, but the reverse.

The dread of Ministers resigning if defeated on their measures will, it is true, induce their followers to support them; but their support will be of an indiscriminating character—that is to say, they will support the bad measures as well as the good ones. The argument, therefore, proves too much, unless we are to assume that Ministers are infallible.

What would be thought of a bank manager, for instance, who, whenever he made a proposal to his directors, insisted that they should either accept that proposal in its entirety or his resignation? Would the directors not say that they were entitled to his best advice in any case, and that it was for them to accept or reject that advice as they thought proper? Suppose the manager went further, and said, "I have a scheme to lay before you which, I believe, would benefit the institution, but that scheme I decline to carry out unless you tell me beforehand that you will not alter it in any way whatever." Would not the directors consider it was time to get rid of such a manager? Yet this is exactly the attitude which the Cabinet assumes towards Parliament, if we are to accept the arguments put forth by the advocates of the present system.

The nomination of the Executive by Parliament would, in my opinion, bring about a vast and beneficial change in the government of the country. It would put an end to the dominating influence of the Premier, and destroy the unity of the Cabinet. Parliament could then remove at pleasure any Minister whose conduct it disapproved of. It would have the selection of Ministers in its own hands, and the best men from both sides of the House would be eligible for office in the same way as the Speaker is now. The selection would not be from one section of Parliament, but from all sections, and the Ministry would represent all shades of opinion. At present one-half of the best men in Parliament are permanently excluded from office. There would also be a possibility of differentiating the functions of administration and legislation. Both kinds of functions are now exercised by the Cabinet. Ministers attempt too much when they undertake to administer the affairs, and at the same time to provide legislative measures for a great empire. The functions of administration are sufficiently onerous and important to engage their undivided attention. By relieving them of the business of legislation, which properly belongs to Parliament, there would be some chance of obtaining an efficient system of departmental supervision, while by leaving Parliament unhampered by considerations of changes of Government it would be able to devote itself zealously to the work of legislation. If the heads of departments found it necessary to recommend legislation, their proposals would, no doubt, be impartially considered by Parliament. In this, as in other matters, Ministers would take their instructions from Parliament, not Parliament from Ministers, as at present. Probably it might be necessary, in order to prevent the time of the House being wasted in discussing the various proposals which might be introduced by