

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WISH TO SIT IN PARLIAMENT

*"For those who see Truth and would follow her; for those who recognize Justice and would stand for her, success is not the only thing. Success! Why, Falsehood has often that to give; and Injustice has often that to give. Must not Truth and Justice have something to give that is their own by proper right—theirs in essence not by accident."*

HENRY GEORGE, 1879.

THIS 19th century development among the English of a sense of responsibility for others, bringing in its train conscience, cannot but astonish the student. For these were the years of the great expansion of the British Empire, and Empire builders are not usually conspicuous for conscience.

In truth this unnatural development was due to a comparatively limited number of prosperous business men, born of the puritan reformation and addicted to religious introspection. Such were my own forbears, and the great Quaker families, Pease, Fry, Buxton, Fox, Bright, etc.; the evangelicals, Wilberforce, Ashley and Hobhouse. They lived a life of their own, cut off from the squirearchy as well as from the illiterates, relying ever on their own judgment, of immense charity and compassion.

Their influence and example inoculated strata below and above them in the social scale. There are few finer examples of altruism among the workers than the resolute support given by the 'clemming' cotton-operatives of Lancashire to the Union Government in the Civil War, and that was clearly due to the inspiration of John Bright. Still today every experienced British politician honours the potency of an appeal to the altruism, or 'better nature', of the British

working-man—he who first saw the light through the clear chapel windows.

Even before the Reform Bill of 1832 this admirable *intelgentzia* began to sweep into Parliament, and to influence those ruling political circles to which their humanitarian and religious doctrines had hitherto been strange. With Parliament as a sounding-board, they aroused the morality or conscience of Victorian England. They captured the Press; they converted the Church; they created a public opinion such as is not always found even in America; an immensely stabilizing influence in a rocking world.

#### THE BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS LAW

Professor Dicey<sup>1</sup> discussed the influence of law upon public opinion. Which creates which, may be debated for ever; but that conscience created the public opinion of the lawmakers of Victorian Britain is certain. They put individual conscience above law, and I am well content to think that the British are now the champion breakers both of law and of public opinion. The Lord Chief Justice adjures me: "How dare you say that I put my law above my conscience!" The High Church Whig, Lord Hugh Cecil, speaking in the Commons, defines the boundaries for Christians: "Acts of Parliament do not make things right or wrong." The suffragettes, like Mr. Gandhi, gloried in gaol; while to have defied the police is almost a *sine qua non* for a labour leader. In Parliament, because we see how laws are made and how soon most of them die, we treat them with perhaps excessive levity. In America I believe they regard every new law as the Act of the People and therefore the Act of God! Here,

<sup>1</sup> Distinguished English legal historian, author of many authoritative legal works, notably "The Relation Between Law and Public Opinion in England during the 19th Century". Originally delivered as a series of lectures at Harvard University in 1898. M.S.

the ordinary citizen's reaction to a new law is indignation against the impertinent interference of Government and the pusillanimity of Parliament in allowing it.

In short, it is Parliament as the sounding-board, not Parliament as a law factory, that makes public opinion—shapes opinion, not only for the schools and for the Press, but for the Church and for the philosopher. All the tossing elements go into a thinking-vat, are there blunged and blended; and in that mixture ferments the political education; from it pours forth the understood responsibility of self-control and liberty. For this blending and fermenting the British Parliament stands unrivalled.

#### WHY THERE IS COMPETITION TO BE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Long before Henry VIII found out that Parliament could be usefully employed, and wrapped it round His Majesty as a shield or as a stalking-horse, getting to Parliament had become the ambition of every Englishman. It involved going to Court, and all that meant advancement, adventure and influence.

The first elected House of Commons met in rebellion in January 1265; the first for which we have any names of those elected met in 1275. From 1295 we have enough names of Members of Parliament, easily identified, to prove my statement in the preceding paragraph. For instance, the squirearchy, not content with the limited number of county seats,<sup>1</sup> competed for the borough representation, offering to serve without pay. So did the budding lawyer; so did the Royal servants. Collectors of Customs, Escheators, Recorders, and Mayors, merchants and pirates (sea-captains), all competed for the pleasure and profit of a trip to town. At it was under

<sup>1</sup> There were only 78 county seats in parliament, till the Palatinates of Cheshire and Durham and the Welsh counties were added, in the 16th century.

Edward I or Henry VIII, so it still is today—not so risky, more burdensome, but as attractive. Still the ambition draws like a magnet, with the added reverberance of immemorial years.

The life into which we enter combines the mental gymnastics of college with the fresh wind of the outer world. There is no other Parliament like the English. For the ordinary man, elected to any senate from Lisbon to Lahore, there may be a certain satisfaction in being elected. The lucky man is to be at least among the rulers, the plaudits of supporters are in his ears, he has the envious admiration of his old associates, perhaps even nobler aspirations may be gratified. But the man who steps into the English Parliament takes his place in a procession which has been filing by since the birth of English history.

Men with long swords and short daggers were his predecessors, as they rode to Westminster over Dunsmore Heath, drinking ale in the taverns of Coventry and Towcester. Men with spiked shoes disputed loudly, in the terms they still use, about the insolence of York and the profusion of Warwick. In slashed breeches and ruffed collars they denounced the bishop of Rome and clamoured for the internment of recusants. The country was 'going to the dogs' under Cromwell, just as it was under Gladstone, as men walked two and two into a Palace Yard that was 'New' in 1600, or called for torches at 'who goes home'.<sup>1</sup>

Ordainers and Appellants, York or Lancaster, Protestant or Catholic, Court or Country, Roundhead or Cavalier, Whig or Tory, Liberal or Conservative, National or Labour—they all fit into that long pageant that no other country in the world can show. And they, one and all, pass on the same

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<sup>1</sup>The ushers in the House of Commons still use this traditional cry to signify the end of the days proceedings. M.S.

inextinguishable torch, burning brightly or flickering, to the next man in the race, while freedom and experience ever grow.

#### THE TITLE

It is little wonder that to write the letters M.P. after your name has become a decoration and a title valued beyond all others; and indeed it will lead to all others should the holder so desire. Because of this ambition and competition, from which no class is exempt, every diverse merit finds its way to Parliament and becomes accentuated. The greatest historians such as Gibbon and Macaulay; philosophers such as Sidney and Mill; the admirals of the north and south and west; Raleigh, Blake and Cromwell; the patriots Pym and Hampden; Marlborough, Rodney and Wellington; the greatest lawyers and the greatest wits; all sat where we sit, and create an atmosphere of considerable pride.

There one mixes on equal terms with all the powerful and famous, influencing each the other as reason or prejudice may decide. Unlike all similar institutions, we live all day in each other's pockets. Only the Ministers have private rooms, and the wise ones do not use them. Quite half the House do not have even unpaid private secretaries. The parties do not bunch together and scowl at the 'enemy', until, of course, we get into the Chamber under the public eye. It is a club, where all are equal; where all know each other by sight, sometimes by name—and occasionally wives' names also. I do not think I know any bores, so well are we trained to confine self-advertisement to the Chamber and our constituencies. There is but one unwritten rule: Never must you reveal on the public platform what was said in the smoking-room or across the dinner-table.

No dicing, no gaming, no cards, no billiard tables, and yet it is undoubtedly the most elect if not most select club in the world, where all are interested in and responsible for all the world. The cynic may say we are all bound together by a common bond—hostility to the Party Caucus in our constituencies. That bond is of course created by the constant insistence of these outsiders that they, and not our own brilliance, put us where we are, and might at any time regret it.

Inside the House, that bitterness of Party strife outside, to which we have to conform in public, strikes us as somewhat vulgar, almost bad form.

#### THE PRICE OF DECORATION

The price of entry to this select debating club—of using this excellent sounding-board—is undoubtedly high. It used to be £1000<sup>1</sup> down and £300 a year. Thanks to the advent of the Labour Party, to payment of Members, and, curiously enough, to that increase in the electorate which has made personal canvassing impossible, the cost is now much less. My contests (when I have any) now cost only £200 to £300; and the £600 a year given us for expenses more than covers the cost of lodging in town, while travelling to and from constituency is now free.

The cost today is the vastly increased work required by constituents. The Member of Parliament has become a post-box for complaints against the bureaucracy. "Dear Jack", you write to the Minister, "What is the answer to this one?" And, in due course, "Dear Jack" replies, "Dear Jos" (in his own hand), followed by an official's answer making it quite clear that the Minister has devoted long hours to a special enquiry into the possibility of securing justice. This, sent

<sup>1</sup> At current rate of exchange £ = \$4.00 approximately. M.S.

on to the aggrieved elector, may, or may not, persuade him to vote for me again; but in any event, democracy is vindicated and bureaucracy compelled to state its case for the defence.

The cost of election is, however, a trifle compared with the humiliating difficulties in getting nominated for election. The youthful aspirant, fresh from a presidency of the Cambridge Union,<sup>1</sup> suffused with desire to serve his country and save the world, encounters the Party Secretary. The Party Secretary has 200 hopeless seats to offer and talks heartily of 'winning his spurs'. Every four years he goes down to a fresh constituency<sup>2</sup> with never a chance to win. Age creeps upon him, bitterness corrodes his youth, and he solaces his soul with the aphorism: He who is not a misanthrope at forty can never have loved mankind.

A local pull is certainly a great help. Because of my name, or family factory, I had a safe seat handed me on a plate; and, after 36 stormy years, all contests have ceased, I have been judged innocuous, and have acquired the halo of immunity. Others, however, face ever the tragedy of losing their seat; and, banished from elysium, try, too often in vain, to re-enter that world in which they delighted. The curse of political life is bitter disappointment. Few, even of those as lucky as myself, carry through to fruition the hopes or ambitions of their youth.

#### THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In connection with the *History of Parliament* I had to produce biographical notices of all Members of Parliament from 1265 to 1918. For this I wanted their minds rather

<sup>1</sup> Foremost undergraduate club and debating society at Cambridge University. Many of its presidents have become prominent statesmen. M.S.

<sup>2</sup> A candidate may run for election in any district and does not necessarily have to reside there. M.S.

than their deeds; and in the case of those still surviving in 1934, I made a bold attempt at political psycho-analysis, by questionnaire. It is true that there was a certain reluctance and even resentment at my questionnaire. Mr. MacDonald, then Prime Minister, replied that my questions were both inquisitive and impertinent. Whereupon I sent the horrid document to Philip Snowden, saying, "Ramsay says I am no gentleman, so I am sure you will answer the questions." He did, adding as a P.S.: "This is the only time in my life when I have agreed with Ramsay MacDonald."

These were the questions, and most survivors answered all—except those relating to their income. If the reader should think them inquisitive, reflect what we would not now give to have had answers to such questions from those Parliament-men who sat under Elizabeth, Cromwell or Queen Anne!

- (1) In what year did you first know to which Party you belonged?
- (2) Who influenced your political thought, *i.e.* father, teacher, parson, etc?
- (3) What books influenced your political views?
- (4) What were your religious convictions at 21?
- (5) What was your favourite newspaper when you first stood for Parliament?
- (6) Why did you want to be a Member of Parliament?
- (7) Who advised you to stand at your first contest?
- (8) What was then your trade, profession, or occupation?
- (9) What was then your annual income, earned and un-earned?
- (10) Had you had any experience of public work—if so, what?
- (11) How did you get the offer of the seat you first won?
- (12) What was then your chief political interest?



- (13) On what, in fact, did you specialize in Parliament?
- (14) What did your seat cost to contest; and how much yearly did it cost you?
- (15) Who, at the time you first became Member of Parliament, was your ideal—(a) living British Statesman, (b) dead Statesman of any land?
- (16) How did Parliament modify your views?
- (17) How did being a Member of Parliament affect your earning capacity?
- (18) What did you enjoy most in Parliamentary life?
- (19) What did you dislike most, apart from facing re-election?
- (20) Which of your speeches do you think was your best?
- (21) What was the greatest speech you remember hearing?
- (22) Did speeches affect your vote—(a) in the House, (b) on Committee?
- (23) What was your best piece of work?
- (24) If you are no longer in Parliament, why did you leave?
- (25) What books have you written? And what books have been written about you?

Sometimes, to old friends, I accompanied the Questionnaire with a letter, such as: "There was a 26th question I had not the courage to ask. We all know at our age that we have not achieved the ambitions of our youth—all that we set out to do. So I wanted to ask also, 'Why did you fail?'—for each of us alone knows why." To which Lord Beaverbrook replied: "I hope that does not mean that you think you have failed. Your speeches have been an inspiration to thousands," which showed quite an unexpected kindly trait in that human dynamo. He *said* he had not failed, that he had created the three greatest newspapers in the world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Daily Express, Evening Standard, Sunday Express.

## AN ALTRUISTIC AMBITION

But what I would insist on emphasizing from all those replies, as well as from considerable experience, is the almost universal British desire to get into Parliament. That is the ambition which draws into a political career the pick of all classes, from the Cambridge undergraduate (such as William Allen in 1895 before attaining his majority), or the Trade Union organizer, to the successful man of business and the retired civil servant. For twenty years Ernest Bevin expressed unwillingness to come into the House—'more power outside Parliament', 'stick to my job'—and so on. One contest and a defeat at Gateshead had slaked ambition for a parliamentary career. All that went to the winds, when, at 55, he had his chance. Ambition to sit in Parliament never dies; the University professor comes in at 60 or 70 years of age; Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, beribboned with countless honours, must get a seat. I remember Mosley in 1931 begging the Tory Chief Whip, Eyres Monsell, to let his 'New Party' have just two or three straight fights against Labour without a Conservative competitor—just two or three coupons; and Monsell's passionate reply: "In the new Parliament there shall be neither a New Party nor a Mosley!" Fascist though he is, it is my opinion that Mosley would 'scrap' his party and his past to get back to that Chamber in which he was so brilliant a performer, but which he professes to deride.

## OR A MEANS TO AN END

You do not get the same ambition or competition for seats in Congress at Washington. I understand that three quarters of the members of the House of Representatives are lawyers. Now, with lawyers a seat is less an end in itself than

a means to an end. About one fifth of the House of Commons have at all times been lawyers; they have been invaluable in our long parliamentary struggle, both because of their power to state a case, and for their wider and more liberal education, contrasting with that of the 'booby squires'. But it is clear that a seat in Parliament will help the career of a lawyer. There is always much for lawyers to get from Parliament. It is a means to a personal end. Those Members of Parliament of most value to democracy are those who seek no personal ends, those who have 'arrived', and can henceforth devote themselves to public work.

This, of course, is much too high a test for any legislature. Even the 'arrived' still have personal ends at which to aim; but though we all have seen much of the seamy side of politics, I believe my colleagues would agree that there is less self-seeking in the British Parliament than in any other similar body; certainly more unselfishness is expected of us.

#### WHAT IS EXPECTED

All men and women tend to behave as others expect them to behave. This was never so obvious as during the blitz. Mainly because of public opinion, people in London did not like to show they were afraid. Because London had stood it so well, Coventry and Bristol must do so too. Because we were praised for it by the American Press, we even improved. I have often been under fire. Never under such circumstances have I not been afraid; but I have always been more afraid of showing it. All our standards are set by what is expected of us; and this is especially true of deceit and lying. Most Englishmen would rather be caught out in robbing the Government, or even a railway company, than in showing fear or telling a lie. The members of any legislature have even a stronger reaction to public opinion. More is expected

of them; more limelight is thrown on them; and they have a corporate responsibility to their body. The Officer caste must be brave; the Church must be respectable; the governing caste must be free from financial corruption—I wish I could say that they must also be independent in judgment and action. Directly the public lowers its expectations, standards will fall. Let public and Press bear this in mind when democracy is under fire.

We are not so foolish in England as to suppose that unselfishness can pervade Parliament. But we do expect that selfishness will take shape as ambition for a political career, and not the vulgar wish to make money through Parliament. There is the laudable ambition to write M.P. after one's name; and there is thereafter, especially for the young, the ambition for success as an M.P. Such success may be registered by obtaining office; or it may be reflected in the approval of the House of one's speeches and activities, constructive or destructive. Whatever the Party, the whole House is interested in its own men—charitable or approving. All resent importations to office of anyone from outside, 'not of the family', who has not learnt our parliamentary ways.

#### ON EGOISM IN PARLIAMENT

The sheer egoist is, of course, a bore. He drops out, or is cured of recounting his own smartness and the stupidity of others. The House sizes such men up with remarkable rapidity; the whole lot are insensibly drawn into behaving with good taste and without animosity. I speak of the ordinary life of the House, not of debate in the public Chamber or on Standing Committee.<sup>1</sup> Even there we tear to pieces argu-

<sup>1</sup> Since 1832 the annual appointment of the ancient Grand Committees, for religion, for grievances, for courts of justice, and for trade, has been discontinued. They had long since fallen into disuse, and served only to mark the ample jurisdiction of the Commons in Parliament. The name Grand Committee is sometimes applied inaccurately to Standing Committees.

ments rather than characters, and I do not remember publicly comparing my opponents to either Ananias or Judas Iscariot.

Close behind the egoist comes the careerist. He is more tolerable. We recognize a sound and natural ambition in which we all share to a certain extent. But the greater your desire to climb up into the Cabinet, the more heart-breaking is the task. Console oneself as one may that 'kissing goes by favour' and not by merit, yet every time that a rival moves up makes others despair. Again and again, in this pathetic struggle, choice has to be made between the two perpetual alternatives: appeasing or terrifying the Chief Whip;<sup>1</sup> between docility and rebellion; between nodding and exploding. The choice is never easy, for the nodder may be forgotten both by the Chief Whip and by the Press; while the exploder may also get so easily the dread label of 'unpractical' or 'crank'. Politicians, however, live by advertisement in the Press; to be lampooned or abused is far better than to be forgotten.

When Charles Masterman and I were young, curly and radical, we always concluded our opposition on Standing Committee by asking the badgered Ministers to dine. Within four years Masterman got office. I did not, only because I was less interested in office than in the taxation of land values—hence 'crank'.

#### SUMMARY OF VIRTUES

The virtues of the House of Commons are therefore these. To belong to it is the ambition of practically all men; in effect, only clergymen of the Established Church and peers of the realm are excluded—both regrettable and accidental ex-

<sup>1</sup> Each party in Parliament appoints a Chief Whip to see that members are on hand during important debates and vote according to party policy. M.S.

clusions. Constant competition and perpetual education keep the best of all classes in Parliament. Public opinion and publicity ensure high standards. Constant debate in and out of the Chamber destroys prejudice and forces action to depend on reason. The immense variety and scope of the work provides agreeable occupation for all, in criticism, construction, and administration; each can select the career open to his talents; each is required for the good of his country. There is among nearly all an affectionate family feeling which provides consolation for failure and encouragement to sacrifice. Finally, by reason of their desire for re-election, all have to keep in close touch with and educate their constituents; and all practise moderation so as not to offend those doubtful electors who may, or may not, vote for them next time.

#### IGNORANCE

What are the charges made against Members of Parliament? That some are ignorant, and they should all have to pass an examination before being allowed to stand for Parliament! This, of course, is said by specialists who have written books or articles which the Members of Parliament have not, and will not read. In fact few Members of Parliament read less than two dailies and one weekly paper; most are writers themselves, which is the best method of acquiring detailed knowledge. Indeed, rubbing shoulders with all men, they acquire the best of educations. I am a fair sample. By profession I am a civil engineer; I have been a civil servant, have travelled widely, have twice held commissions in the Army, twice in the Navy.

For wide reading, critical judgment, and knowledge of the world, the society of the Houses of Parliament stands head and shoulders above all other, even that of the Fleet

Street<sup>1</sup> journalists and the barristers<sup>2</sup> of the Inns of Court.<sup>3</sup> The Trade Union section of the Labour Party are not so well-read as their fellows, know less history, and are ignorant of the classics; but they make up for that by greater knowledge both of local government and their fellow men. It has often been said that the finest autobiography written in the last twenty years in the English language is *A Man's Life* by Jack Lawson, Miners' Member for Chester-le-Street. To which may be added that I can find you in the House of Commons a specialist in every subject, even in the setting of crossword puzzles!

#### LAZINESS

Then it is said (chiefly by the other side in their constituency) that Members of Parliament are lazy. Many speak but rarely—either in the Chamber or in Committee, or in the country. Their names do not get into the papers, and their constituents feel defrauded and dub them lazy. In many cases such Members of Parliament have their livelihood to win in their own professions or businesses; Parliament is, with them, a side line, a part-time job, even an after-dinner variety show. If we were all professional politicians the House of Commons would be terrible. If the chorus all wanted to do star turns, the stage would be a riot, if not a shambles. Even now ten men rise to speak directly one sits down. If they all spoke I should very rarely have a chance to enlighten the House. Thank heaven for the lazy ones who are content to cheer Churchill!

<sup>1</sup> London thoroughfare famous because of its large number of newspaper offices. M.S.

<sup>2</sup> British legal profession consists of barristers and solicitors. The former try cases in open court whilst the latter prepare the briefs and transact routine legal business. M.S.

<sup>3</sup> The four Inns of Court are professional organizations to one of which each barrister must belong. M.S.

Every by-election provokes a spate of letters to the Press complaining that the local Conservative Party caucuses will not select the bright young brains of the Tory Party, but prefer silent men of substance. I give away no confidences by stating that the bright young geniuses in the Labour Party feel (but dare not write) in like manner about the safe seats which go to the nominees of the rich Trade Unions. It was of old the practice in the Miners' Unions to find seats in Parliament for their superannuated Agents, and thus augment their old friends' inadequate pensions. Neither Party, by this common practice, secures the most energetic representation; but they do acquire certain 'noddors', quite agreeable to the Party Whips. Blame, if there is to be blame, must be with the Party system. I do not like that system; but this use of Parliament as a mausoleum is one of the least of my charges against Party management.

#### NODDERS, AND LABOUR RULES

The third charge made against Members of Parliament, probably best founded and most serious, is that they show so little independence and do always as they are told. Party discipline tends ever to become more strict and the penalties for the breaking of Party Rules become ever more formidable. No aspirant may become a candidate for the Labour Party, either for local Councils or for Parliament, without solemnly undertaking to obey the Party Rules. Till this undertaking is signed the candidature will not be endorsed at Headquarters. The Rules are that one may not vote against any decision come to by the weekly meetings of the Party Members of Parliament. One may abstain from the vote and may speak against the Party view, but the Labour Member of Parliament or Town Councillor must not vote against the Party decision. That I hold to be an infringement of the



rights and duties of Members of Parliament. Party decisions of this sort in old days were not numerous; they are now frequent, and the Rule is being silently extended to cover all decisions that have to be made by the *pro tem* Party leader on the spur of the moment in the course of any debate.

I could never have joined the Labour Party had this Rule been in practice in 1919. It is a surrender of conscience, reason and duty which ought to be intolerable to any Member of Parliament. Members of Parliament are not instructed delegates; they are there to hear, weigh and decide, according to their own judgment, every issue put before them. The coercion of these Rules is a first step in the direction of Fascism and Nazi-ism. It sets Party before country, force above reason. Debate becomes useless; and electors are betrayed. The public are entitled to know how their representative votes. It was a triumph for democracy when secret voting was ended by the record and publication of votes given in the House. But the Party meeting is private, no record is taken of the votes.

What is the position of the enquiring elector who had perhaps received a pledge before giving his vote. He may ask, "Why did you vote for extending drink licences?" and be answered, "That was the Party decision." The elector may then ask, and ask in vain: "How did you vote on the matter at the Party meeting?" only to be told "That was private, I must not say." Decisions, secretly arrived at, and imposed by threat of expulsion and ruin, square with no definition of democracy, nor with government by reason. Disciplinary action was never taken against me because I was the answer to the accusation which no British Party cares to accept, of being pledge-bound to an infallible Pope. I was, as it were, 'an outward and visible sign of grace' in the Party, a certificate of liberality.

## DISCIPLINED 'NODDERS' COME FROM GERMANY

These Labour Party Rules would have been canvassed far more by Press and public had not the Conservative Party drifted in the same direction. Just as both Parties have absorbed from infected Germany a measure of Hitler's anti-Semitism, so they have also accepted some of the dragooning of the authoritarian school. The Labour Party call it 'Majority Rule', as always practised in the Trade Union movement with its catchy watchword: "United we stand, divided we fall". The Conservative Party call it 'discipline', and excuse themselves by a certain pre-war sympathy with Nazi and Fascist 'efficiency'. Both are inspired indeed by fear of independence and of argument. Neither recognizes in such inspiration the acceptance of fascism and the destruction of freedom.

While the Labour Party relies on its Rules and elected Executive, the Nationals or Conservatives rely on reward and punishment. One-Party government, such as we have had with two short breaks for twenty-five years, leaves all promotion and reward in the hands of the caucus. No doughty fighters are needed on the public platform; no power in debate to defeat the enemy is essential to Party success. The Chief Whip or Prime Ministers can reward docility rather than brilliance. The punishment of the critic and discontented is also easier—they can be reduced to silence.

## INCREASE OF CLOSURE ON INDEPENDENCE

The methods of closing debate, not only in the House but also in Standing Committee, have been extended to help Ministers and to balk critics. The power given to Mr. Speaker to select the amendments which can be debated has grave dangers. It might be used to avoid inconvenience to government, and may always render vain the long labours of the

independent critic. It would be quite impossible now to hold up an unimportant Bill for weeks on Committee and for nights in the House as we often did in past days. Further, the increased use of allied 'usual channels'—*i.e.* the Whips of the two sides in unholy alliance for the exaction of discipline—and the acceptance by the Chairman of long 'Party Lists' of speakers, have been coupled with curtailment of debate in these recent days. This makes easy that final punishment—the vain attempt to speak repeated all day in the constant failure to 'catch the eye' of Mr. Speaker. You must be on a Party List, approved by the Party Whip, if you are in the modern Party.

Therefore 'discipline' is easily enforced, as easily by Government as by Labour opposition. This may drive men of independent mind out of Parliament, which would be a calamity. This does justify the complaint of the man in the street that Members of Parliament are just voting dummies. Both Parties are equally to blame for the accusation and for its degree of justice.

#### THE CURE FOR SUCH DRAGOONING

The Labour Party may be cured by losing the confidence of the electorate; for the black-coated worker and Nonconformist dislike their Member of Parliament being controlled by the Trade Union machine. The Liberal Party, in the great Parliaments of 1906-18, used none of these adventitious aids to discipline; and there is more than a little identity between the Liberal voter of 1906 and the modern Labour elector, gazing askance at the more rigid Communist Party.

The Conservative Party may be cured by perceiving whither they drift under discipline; and also Churchill hardly needs methods which may have been required to preserve his predecessors in office. The House, too, has the matter largely

in its own hands. It has only to resolve to abolish Party recommendations for speakers, and it gets rid of the worst disciplinary punishment.

But it remains my profound conviction that Parties destroyed Parliaments in Germany, France, Italy and Spain; and that the pernicious development of Parties in this country during the last 50 years is here, also, the gravest danger to our democracy.

If I have overdrawn in this chapter both the virtues and the vices of Members of the British Parliament, the reader must remember that the present time of war gives no fair picture of Parliament, and that generalizations based on pre-war days will not easily be translated into post-war practice.