

ideal form of government would be a complete democracy. But a complete democracy is not practicable. The device of government by elected representatives is, however, as close as a modern state can come to straight democracy. What, he says, are the distinctive characteristics of the form of government best fitted to promote the interest of any given people? One of the first conditions on which good government depends is found in the qualities of the human beings composing the society over which the government is exercised.

The first question in respect to any political institution is how far it tends to foster in the members of the community various desirable qualities, moral and intellectual. The government which does this the best has every likelihood of being the best in all other respects, since it is on these qualities, so far as they exist in the people, that all possibility of goodness in the practical operation of the government depends. The other constituent element of the merit of a government is the degree in which it is adapted to take advantage of the amount of good qualities which may at any time exist, and make them instrumental to the right purposes. The superiority of popular government rests upon two principles. The first is that the rights and interests of any person are only secure when the person interested is himself able and disposed to stand up for them. The second is that the general prosperity attains a greater height and is more widely enjoyed in proportion to the amount and varieties of the personal energies enlisted in promoting it.

Human beings are only secure from evil at the hands of others in proportion as they have been and are self-protecting; and they only achieve a high degree of success in their struggle with nature in proportion as they are self-dependent, relying on what they themselves can do, either separately or in concert, rather than on what others do for them. "If", says Mill, "we consider the influence of a form of government upon character, we shall find the superiority of popular government over every other still more divided and indisputable. The question really depends on another and more fundamental one, namely, which of two common types of character, for the general good of humanity, it is the most desirable should predominate, the active or the passive type; that which struggles against evils or that

which endures them; that which bends to circumstances or that which endeavours to make circumstances bend to itself."

Now, are we Newfoundlanders of the passive type of character? It would seem so. "For", as Mill says, "there can be no doubt that the passive type of character is favoured by the government of one or a few (such as seven men appointed by one man 2,000 miles away — Commission of Government); whilst the active self-helping type by a government of the many." I am not in accord with the idea of government by commission, by the Dominions Office, and I think every man here will agree with me on that.

Irresponsible rulers (i.e. irresponsible to the people) need the quiescence of the ruled more than they need any activity but that which they can compel. The only government that can freely satisfy all exigencies of the social state is one in which the people participate. Any participation in government, even in the smallest function, is useful. And I want to indicate there, what part in the government today do our people share? What part do they take in the government of this country? None whatsoever! Absolutely none! We are all like the man to whom Mr. Keough referred yesterday: we do not care who sits in the seat of government as long as we get three square meals a day. Think that over and ask yourselves, do we or do we not want to be ruled by Commission of Government? But participation by the people in government should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement in the community will allow; and nothing less can be more desirable than the admission of all the people to a share in the sovereign power of the state.

In a commonwealth, however, says Mill, "exceeding a single small town, [all cannot] participate personally in any but some minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative." That is to say, that the whole people, or some numerous portion of them exercise through deputies periodically elected by themselves the ultimate controlling power. Now, representative government must fulfill three fundamental conditions:

- (1) That the people should be willing to receive it.
- (2) That they should be willing and able