

PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM

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This refers to the interview with Mr. A.P. Antulay (March 14) regarding the suitability of a presidential form of government, given the continuous threat of instability we have been witnessing under the present parliamentary system.

A truly democratic presidential system as adopted by the U.S. and France has several plus points, including a stable government, direct induction of the best brains in the cabinet, excellent committee system for dealing with all legislation, and might, therefore, be the right answer to our problems. However, it is essential to have the requisite checks and balances while adopting the presidential system. Otherwise, it is apt to degenerate into a dictatorship.

While Mr. Antulay has ardently favoured the presidential system, his past utterances have created doubts as to whether he was in favour of a truly democratic presidential system or whether he was favouring the system in order to help his then mentor, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, obtain wide powers. In his interview, he says, "If the president is elected as the supreme executive of the nation and he wants to do certain things, he should be in a position to do so and should not be allowed to be voted down by a Senate or a Congress... But even in the U.S., where the judges are much more outspoken, they are most reluctant to strike down a legislation; here in India the judges take pride in their differences in approach with that of the executive."

His remarks are at variance with the fact that the Supreme Court in the U.S. has struck down several legislations passed by the Congress. In fact, during President Roosevelt's era, as many as 11 legislations passed by his government were struck down by the Supreme Court. When Roosevelt proposed a change in the structure of the Supreme Court, it was rejected by the judicial Committee of the senate, where his own party had a majority.