

MR. HEGDE'S THESIS

(The Times of India – January 14, 1987)

Sir, - I refer to your editorial, 'A Poor Case' (December 27), where you have commented on Mr. Hegde's interview in Current on the presidential system.

It is heartening to note that at last opposition leaders seem to understand the inherent advantages of a truly democratic presidential system, and are advocating its adoption.

Having chosen the British model, we have failed to evolve a strong two-party system, which is the basis for the successful functioning of parliamentary democracy. In the absence of a strong opposition, our Prime Minister probably enjoys more power than either the British premier or the U.S. president. One might well say we have the worst of both worlds.

The U.S. Senate is able to keep a check on the executive because of its wide powers. These include, the total freedom to vote on any law, irrespective of the party line, the powers to act as an investigating body, to impeach and to ratify foreign treaties. There is less emphasis on the party system under the U.S. model and, on occasion, the President's own party is as responsible for reining in the executive as the opposition.

The separation of the executive from the legislature has prevented U.S. Congressmen from being tempted to enjoy the fruits of power. It is this temptation which is at the root of our politicians trying to get into the ruling party on one pretext or another.

The U.S. system of direct elections for the mayor's office (at the city level) and the governor's office (at the state level) gives the leadership in the lower echelons more confidence than our system permits. Several of our problems would be better tackled if the leaders asserted themselves more, as they would if they were to be directly elected.