

## THE ELECTIONS

(The Times of India - December 15, 1989)

Sir, - Like several west European countries, we are facing a situation wherein under a multi-party system, no single party was able to achieve a clear majority. In fact, for a vast multi-lingual, multi-religious country like ours, characterized by sectional interests and diversity of views, we do not possess the basic requisites of a two party system. It is now time for us to study and learn from the experience of the liberal democracies prevailing in other countries having similar conditions so as to build up a system which could provide a stable government inspite of having several competing parties.

Thus, for example, the present West German Constitution (framed in 1949) although basically parliamentary in character, has provided for a novel way to ensure stability, in the absence of a strong two-party system. Under the Constitution, the federal chancellor after being elected by the majority votes of the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) enjoys full stability. Once elected, he cannot be forced to resign by a successful vote of no-confidence unless the Bundestag elects a new chancellor as his successor with the majority of its members. This prevents the negative vote so often witnessed in our system and restrains the parties from dislodging the incumbent without first reaching an agreement on his likely substitute. This pattern of government also known as 'demo-authoritarian' has provided for stable rule in spite of the fact that an authentic two-party system has not materialized uptil now. Currently, there are three major political parties and only once in the 1957 elections, were the Christian Democrats able to form their own government without collaboration with the other parties.

Japan has adopted a system whereby in the first round of ballot for the post of chief executive (prime-minister at the central level or chief minister at the state level) all the contenders from amongst the different parties are allowed to contest and if no one is able to get a clear majority in the first round of voting then the first two candidates only are allowed to contest in the second round and the winner is allowed to form the government. In fact, such a system has been adopted by us in the election of the President. With suitable modifications, such a system might be adopted in selecting the chief executive (Prime Minister at the national level and the Chief Minister at the state level) in future in our country.