

WHY NOT THE AMERICAN SYSTEM?

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In 'Prime Minister ban gaya President' (Special Report, July 5), Mr. Dorab Sopariwalla has written about correcting some of the misconceptions about the US Presidential System. In this connection, I would like to state the following :

1) According to him, since the President is elected by an electoral college (and not directly), there is a possibility that he could be elected even without receiving a majority. However, such an incident has happened only once in the history of the US.

In sharp contrast, we have had Prime Ministers whose parties have received less than 20 percent of the popular votes, such as in the case of V.P. Singh or Chandrasekhar or Deve Gowda or I.K. Gujral. Even the BJP received a mere 33 per cent of the total votes in the elections to the 12th Lok Sabha.

2) Regarding his contention that an elected President can have a difficult time if his party does not enjoy the majority in Congress. However, it so happens that on many occasions, the US President finds the opposition favourable to his recommendations than his own party members. This is because, under the American System, full freedom is available to every member of Congress to vote on any legislation in accordance with his own judgment. There is no whip in the US legislature as is commonly found in the Parliamentary System.

Also, the President has a veto power which generally induces a compromise.

3) Regarding the composition of the cabinet, it is a common practice to find that a large majority of the ministers in any presidential cabinet are professionals.

Mr. Sopariwalla mentions that we can improve the caliber of our ministers by nominating distinguished people in Parliament via. the Rajya Sabha. However, in the last 50 years, a tiny fraction - amounting to not more one per cent of the total ministers - have been nominated from outside Parliament. M.C. Changla, Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, John Mathai and Dr. Manmohan Singh are among those few.