

These representatives or members of Parliament sit in the House of Representatives, and compose the Parliament which is elected periodically—normally, in New Zealand, after 3 years.

*As its name implies, Parliament conducts its debates in public upon proposals affecting the community, so that the people are aware of what is taking place. The public can then decide, being fully informed, what changes it desires when one Parliament ends and another is elected.*

The growth of the party system shows that Parliamentary business is more conveniently conducted by parties than by individual members. There may be, and often are, more than two parties, but the party which is able to obtain the support of the majority of members in the House forms the Government Party. The next largest party forms the Opposition Party. The first business of the Government Party is to select a leader and form a Cabinet, in effect, a committee of the Party. Members of the Cabinet are known as Cabinet Ministers. They have important executive duties, as will be seen later. In this capacity they are known as Ministers of State or Ministers of the Crown. The leader of the Government Party is, of course, the Prime Minister.

In addition to the House of Representatives, there is often a second Chamber. In New Zealand this is called the Legislative Council, or Upper House and is composed of members who are nominated and hold office for a period of years. Its functions are mainly advisory, for it cannot over-ride the House of Representatives or veto its legislation. Although it plays a useful part in the legislature, space does not permit a discussion upon its activities.

The process by which a proposal becomes law is, in outline, something like this: somebody wants a new law or an old law amended—that somebody may be an individual member, a Department of the Executive or the Government Party in furtherance of its policy. The proposal is discussed by Cabinet, a Bill is drafted and considered by the Government Party, then sub-

mitted for the suggestions of the Executive Department which will be required to administer the measure if it becomes law.

The Bill is then debated in the House of Representatives, amended where necessary, as a result of the debate, voted upon, and if passed, becomes an Act of Parliament. After further formalities it becomes law in the form of a *Statute*. This process ensures that any proposal is thoroughly considered before it is allowed to affect the public as law.

It is of interest to look at the procedure in the House and to examine the reasons behind this procedure. The Opposition Party has already been mentioned; it is known as the Official Opposition, and its leader carries the paid appointment of *Leader of the Opposition*. Its functions in connection with legislation are to oppose, to test by cross-examination as it were, legislation brought forward by the Government Party. The most satisfactory and lasting laws are usually made by a Parliament in which both parties are strong, not only in numbers, but in ability and personality.

*The result of good debates is, on the one side, to bring out the arguments in favour of the proposal; on the other to expose its weaknesses and suggest alternatives. If these alternatives themselves stand the test of debate and prove more acceptable to the public, the result is two-fold; the Bill becomes a better Act by going through the fire of debate, and the public, through the Press and wireless, can judge the calibre of its representatives and learn what the Act means and implies.*

Having briefly considered the organisation of Parliament and how laws are made, observe how it exercises control over the Executive. One of the members of Cabinet, in his capacity as a Minister of State—and for this office he receives a salary—is responsible for a Department of the Executive (commonly known as a Government Department).

He must report to Parliament from time to time upon the activities of his Department, and be prepared to answer