J. Smith, “Debating the reform of Canada’s Parliament,” in F.E. Seidle and D. Docherty, eds., *Reforming Parliamentary Democracy* (MQUP, 2003)

**Overview**

Chapter considers the case for the reform of the parliamentary system – both the criticisms of parliament and the possible reforms are reviewed. Argues, really, for greater study of possible reforms – as at this point, the risk of overlooked and unwelcome ramifications of reform are still too grave.

**Background**

Basic principles of Parliament:

* Representation by population
* Accountability of the political executive to the executive legislature – to be secured through (1) mandating that money bills originate in HOC; (2)conferring on the executive a monopoly of the authority to sponsor money bills there; and (3) requiring that the executive so empower and maintain the confidence of a majority of the membership
* A constitutional opposition

Possible reasons for want of reform:

* Increasingly adversarial nature of elected representatives in the HOC
* Simple requirement of govt requiring the confidence of a majority of the elected legislature does not in and of itself require there be disciplined parties
* Ds
* It is essential to stress that the organizational pattern of government vs the opposition that gives rise to these ills is compelled by the combination of responsible govt and disciplined political parties

Reform:

* In general, reform has meant reform of the procedure in the HOC. Two objectives have been pursued:
  + One is to streamline the handling of the business of the House
  + The other is to engage private members in useful and productive activities
* Possible reforms include an elected Senate, a restricted confidence convention in the HOC and more free votes, fixed elections, and a change in the electoral system in the direction of PR

**Conclusions**

Two conclusions come out of the review:

1. The proposals for direct democracy, an elected Senate, a restricted confidence convention in the HOC and more free votes, fixed elections, and a change in the electoral system in the direction of PR are likely to produce a radical change in the existing system
2. The direction of that change is unpredictable