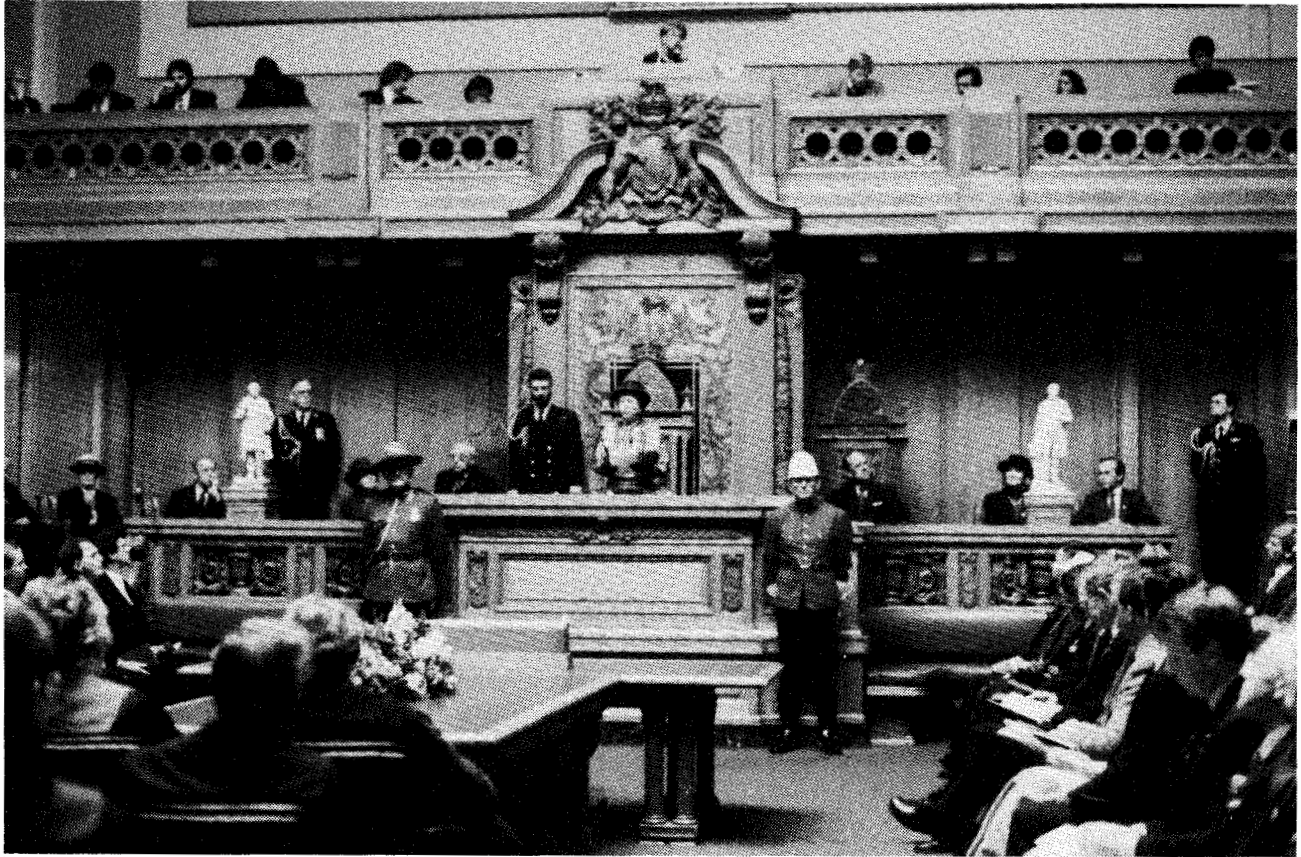

The Queen in Saskatchewan

Gordon Barnhart



Several hundred years ago in Britain the Crown and the House of Commons engaged in a struggle for control of the Realm. The Commons emerged victorious and to symbolize their independence the Monarch never sets foot in that Chamber. She reads the Throne Speech from the House of Lords. The same principle is followed in Canada where her representative, the Governor General meets the Commons only in the Senate.

In provincial legislatures the situation is somewhat different. They are all unicameral and the Queen's

representative does actually deliver the Throne Speech in the Chamber. It is unusual, however, for the Queen to make any speeches in the legislative chamber. Such an event occurred last October in Saskatchewan. During the course of a five-day visit the Queen was invited to speak to legislators and guests in the Chamber although the House was not officially in session.

The theme of the Royal Visit was "Parliamentary Government and Constitutional Monarchy." In her speech the Queen directed her remarks particularly toward the youth of the province and the country. The ceremony was broadcast live nation-wide through the Legislative Broadcast Services and the Canadian Broadcast Corporation. Her remarks, dealt

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with the democratic way of life under the Canadian Crown. She noted :

Saskatchewan has a tradition of respect, indeed enthusiasm, for cultural diversity. This tradition is protected and extended through the historic institutions of Crown and Legislature. The Commonwealth, from whose meeting of Heads of Government in Vancouver I have just come, also provides an example of free nations coming together to promote the interests of a wide diversity of people, cultures and religions. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which met here in Conference under the Presidency of your Speaker only two years ago, must have found in your city a sympathetic environment.

This talk of Parliament and Crown may seem somewhat remote to the children watching this ceremony on television. However, I can tell you all that it is these very things which enable you to learn freely about what is going on in the world, and to hold and express your opinions without fear. I hope you will all take an active interest in your Legislature and your government, either as well-informed voters or even, perhaps, as Members of the Legislature.

The Crown represents the basic political ideals which all Canadians share. It stands for the idea that individual people matter more than theories; that we are all subject to the rule of law. These ideals are guaranteed by a common loyalty, through the Sovereign, to community and country.

Only if you give them your active support, will Parliamentary institutions continue to flourish in this Province as a guarantee of tolerance, diversity and freedom under the Crown.

The Royal Visit also marked the 75th Anniversary of the Official Opening of the Legislative Building which was opened in 1912 by the Duke of Connaught, Governor General of Canada.

Construction on the Legislative Building started in 1906 with some departments moving into the Building as early as 1910. The Legislative Assembly held its annual session in the Reading Room of the Legislative Library in 1911 because

the Chamber was not finished. The Assembly was able to move into its new Chamber in January 1912.

By the fall of 1912, the construction of the Legislative Building was advanced enough to be ready for the opening ceremonies. The Duke of Connaught, third son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert said on that occasion:

I am glad thus to be identified with the Province of Saskatchewan and desire to congratulate all those concerned on the dignified building they have erected here.

In declaring this legislative building open and dedicated to the purposes of the Executive Government and the Legislatures of the Province, I do so with the prayer that the decisions arrived at, and the administrative work carried out under the roof, may, under the blessing of Providence, always be for the lasting benefit of the Province of Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately, the Honourable Walter Scott, Premier and Minister of Public Works, and the main force behind the construction of the Legislative Building, became ill and could not witness the opening of a Building that represented his vision for the future of the Province of Saskatchewan.

Seventy-five years and four days later Queen Elizabeth, in the Legislative Chamber, unveiled a plaque marking the Anniversary.

It is perhaps characteristic of relatively new provinces such as Saskatchewan, to celebrate the anniversaries of buildings rather than paying recognition and honour to the institutional cornerstones of our society such as the Crown and Parliament. It is these institutions that have developed, matured and survived over the centuries to serve and protect our way of life and our right to free elections and free speech. The citizens of Saskatchewan were pleased and honoured to have Their Majesties visit their province. In many countries of the world the freedoms we enjoy under a Parliamentary Government and Constitutional Monarchy do not exist. ★