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# *CPA and the Parliamentary Profession*

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by Hon. Joan Sawicki, MLA

*The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association brings together legislators from around the world for discussion of matters of mutual interest. Recently a Working Paper was prepared by the CPA outlining future directions of the organization. The Working Paper was one of the topics discussed at the 1992 Canadian Regional Conference held in Newfoundland. The following article is based on remarks by the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly.*

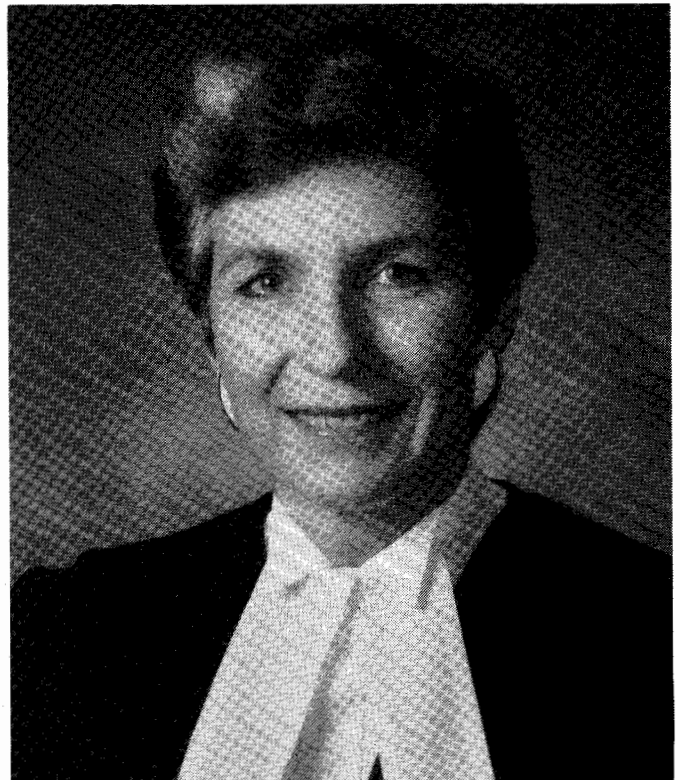
I welcome the opportunity to discuss the future of the CPA, not as Speaker of the British Columbia Legislature nor as a member of the Canadian Regional Executive, but simply as a relatively new member of a Legislature who believes the CPA has something to offer each of us.

As we all know, politicians are not even close to the top of the list of professions held in high regard by the Canadian public. In fact, some would suggest there are few other competitors for the bottom of the list!

Like parenthood, there is not a lot of training involved in becoming a politician. With a few "pre-natal classes" in the form of candidate workshops and with a good campaign and a little bit of luck, almost anyone who wants to can become a politician.

The evolution from politician to parliamentarian takes a lot more hard work and that is why we need the CPA and why it is important to discuss where we, as parliamentarians and the CPA as an organization, go from here.

We need to regard the CPA as our professional organization, like similar bodies for teachers or engineers. As with other professional organizations, the CPA should be our vehicle to build on the common



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ground among parliamentarians and should grapple with tough issues facing us. To a great degree, the opinion of the public towards us will be a reflection of how we as members in this profession regard ourselves.

A number of recommendations of the Working Party deal with branch activities and branch functions as a means of strengthening the CPA. Quite rightly, the Working Party felt they should not direct any branch on how to conduct its affairs, but clearly, this has been one of our problems. If we as individual members are not taking our professional organization seriously, how can we expect heads of government and the public in general to recognize the Association as the parliamentary wing of the Commonwealth, which is put forward as one of our primary objectives?

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With more active branches, regular annual activities and programmes, above and beyond attendances at conferences and seminars, and with guest speakers and workshops, we will be better able to move beyond the partisanship that can so often dominate, in a very negative way, our parliamentary institutions.

Obviously, party labels are an integral part of our system of government. Contrary to what appears to be has become the view of the public, the media, and perhaps too many of us, however we have other obligations, above and beyond our role as members of a particular political party. The role the CPA can play, and the one I believe it should play, is to build on those aspects that bring us together as elected members of legislative assemblies representing and accountable to those who elect us. This is what we have in common with each other - and to a greater or lesser degrees, what we share with our counterparts throughout the Commonwealth.

If we are to fulfil the Association's objective to be respected as the parliamentary wing of the Commonwealth and recognized authority on parliamentary democracy and democratic institutions we have to be prepared to implement the recommendations of the Working Party in terms of:

- establishing study groups;
- producing authoritative study papers and reference documents;
- developing our expertise and availability for more active parliamentary seminars;
- being involved in election monitoring;
- doing whatever is needed to be a positive force in strengthening and sustaining parliamentary democracy.

We need to quickly get our own house in order within the CPA. Both within the Commonwealth and outside the Commonwealth, particularly in South America and in emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, I believe we have an obligation to share our knowledge. And I use the word "share" in its true sense because it is by no means a one-way street. If we as freely-elected representatives really believe in democracy and parliamentary institutions, we need to be actively involved in the continuing evolution of both.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to one other recommendation by the Working Party that constitutes a small but significant step forward on an issue that is a priority to me and I hope to all other parliamentarians. I am referring to the under-representation of women in the parliaments not only in Canada, but all over the Commonwealth. With 50% of the population, women still represent, at best, 10-20% of those elected to office.

One mandate of the working party was to look at the increasing requests to accommodate "special interest groups" at CPA annual conferences. While I reject the idea that 50% of the population can be regarded as a special interest group, I was gratified to receive the support of colleagues on the executive to adopt an amendment to recognize the Commonwealth Women's Parliamentary Group and to provide time at annual conferences for CWPG business meetings. This will provide an important communication network for women parliamentarians on an issue common to us all.

I am also pleased that one of the five panel topics to be discussed at the 1992 annual conference is the financial, cultural, and institutional barriers to increased participation of women in the political process throughout the Commonwealth. This is the kind of issue to which I believe the CPA can and should take a leadership role, within the context of promoting parliamentary democracy - provincially, nationally, throughout the Commonwealth and indeed, the world. †

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# Mackenzie King: The Young Journalist

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by Arthur Milnes

Most of Canada's Prime Ministers were lawyers. Sir John A. Macdonald entered a Napanee, Ontario law office at the age of 15. Brian Mulroney cut his teeth in Montreal legal circles. John Diefenbaker's legal exploits are a Prairie legend. The list goes on.

But Canada's longest serving Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, never saw a courtroom or legal boardroom. His arrival in politics followed a stint pounding the pavement as a reporter in Toronto during the final decade of the last century.

King was Prime Minister for twenty-two years, longer even than Macdonald, but he is remembered now mostly for belief in the supernatural including the ability to communicate with his mother and others who had passed away. He is also remembered for the massive personal diary he kept which continues to enthrall and confuse students and historians alike.

Few are aware of another aspect of his life, his career as a journalist. Indeed, his reporting for the *Globe* and the *Daily Mail and Empire* had a great deal to do with his eventual entry into government and politics. King came to journalism naturally. His grandfather was none other than William Lyon Mackenzie, newspaper editor, publisher and leader of the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada. The Toronto Historical Board still operates a 19th century newspaper press in Mackenzie's house on Bond Street. King's father, John King of Berlin, Ontario (now Kitchener) had been an editor and life-long contributor to the *Berlin Telegraph*.

Mackenzie King was only 16 when he arrived in Toronto as a student at the University of Toronto in the fall of 1891. After his arrival, he naturally gravitated towards the school paper and his name soon appeared in the *Varsity*. By the time of his graduation in 1895, King had been an assistant editor and head of the sport's department at the school paper. Throughout his undergraduate years, King made a habit of regularly submitting articles to the *Globe* concerning Varsity

events. His first *Globe* article appears to be an October 5, 1893 account of Varsity's victory over Upper Canada College in rugby. This practice continued and he even offered the same services to *Saturday Night* magazine but was rejected.

He had planned to continue in academia but plans for a fellowship fell through and King had to find a job. So, he found himself a position with the *Globe* as a reporter during the fall of 1895. They paid him the grand total of \$7 a week. Though it was not his first choice of a job, he was soon telling his diary that a year in journalism would be "an extra year of practical experience in the great school of life."

King was assigned the police-court beat for the paper. "I had a zigzag route to follow today, and the extremes seemed far apart. This morning I was at the police court, recording lists of drunks, vagrants, burglars, ...cases of non-support and the like. This kept me busy till nearly noon," he wrote in his diary on March 13, 1896, describing part of his day on the job.

He stayed at the *Globe* for nearly nine months and earned \$275.75 before departing for graduate school in Chicago in late 1896.

When he came back to Toronto in the summer of 1897, he once again had to find a job and turned to journalism. This time it was with the *Daily Mail and Empire*, and his work there had a great deal to do with his eventual arrival in Ottawa and entry into politics.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1897, King spent several days working on a special feature about the living and working conditions among Toronto's poor and mostly immigrant classes. What he saw shocked him. "What a day I have had today and how I have witnessed the oppression of man over his fellows," the 22-year-old wrote in his diary after touring a local sweat-shop during his research. The result was four full-page articles in Saturday editions of the *Mail and Empire* during September and October of 1897. Toronto readers were given blunt descriptions of the filth and oppression which was a daily part of life for thousands of Toronto's immigrant workers.

Readers were introduced to, among others, a middle aged garment worker who, "could hardly speak with a consumptive cough which is taking her life away." The

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woman had worked in the garment trade most of her life and her daughters were also employed in the industry. King also described them. "A little girl, 16 years of age, who is thin and sickly in appearance, stood by her side and related how she had worked for the past eight years for a large wholesale house, most of the time for two dollars a week. She now intended to help her mother at the machine," King wrote, adding that her nine-year-old sister was also employed as a labourer.

King also gave readers the other side of the story and interviewed a local sweat-shop owner who had been in the business for over 10 years and who employed 15 workers at the time. "When I asked what he paid them he said, 'Well, I have to work hard myself and I do the best I can. I do not treat the men bad but I end up taking advantage of the women. I have a girl here who can do as much and as good work as a man and she gets \$5 a week. The man who is standing next to her gets \$11', he matter-of-factly told the young *Mail and Empire* reporter.

King's series also dealt with crowded housing in Toronto's immigrant communities, and the racism blacks experienced in the city. He wrote that there were about 800 blacks in Toronto and that unfortunately, because of racism, most of the men left Toronto because there were better opportunities in the United States. He also related the story of how the community was saddened by a recent example of racism on the part of the local military. "Especially were they grieved when one of their number, after having practiced for six months in the band of a city regiment, and after having been granted his uniform, was refused admission when about to be sworn in and given the reason that he might look like a black horse among a lot of white ones," King wrote.

With these facts in hand, and before publication of his articles, the gutsy young man marched off with his father to tell a family friend about what he had seen in the homes and sweat-shops of Toronto. The friend was William Mulock, Postmaster General in the newly elected government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

King informed the Minister that much of the work being performed in the sweat-shops was being done for government clothing contracts, mostly for the militia and post office. This was hardly a situation that Canada's first Liberal government in twenty-five years could allow and King knew it.

On the spot, Mulock commissioned the reporter to write a report to him about the sweat shop system. One week later, the Minister announced reforms in his own department regarding clothing contracts. By October, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, hearing of King's work, changed the process so that all government contracts would have clauses demanding reasonable hours of work, fair wages and sanitary conditions for workers. King had accomplished every investigative reporter's dream. He had caused positive change through his work.

The situation was not bad for a 22-year-old and King was not unaware of its significance. "This has been the first influential part I have played in the history of Canadian politics," he wrote in his faithful diary.

Former TV Ontario Chairman and King biographer, Bernard Ostry, advises caution in heaping too much praise onto King for such incidents. "If you recognize who he regarded as his masters and look at his later work for the Rockefellers, you have to think," Ostry says from his home in Toronto. "His deep interest in the poor and weak, though probably genuine, was combined with a stronger desire to become known to the rich and the powerful," he says.

Ostry might be correct in suggesting we question King's motives for approaching someone like the Postmaster General in this situation but this should not take away from his very real accomplishments in this case.

In any event, Laurier and Mulock were very impressed with the young Mackenzie King and they did not forget him. Three years later, they invited King to join them in Ottawa as editor of the new *Labour Gazette*, and once having arrived in Ottawa, he began his climb to the Prime Minister's Office. †

## Notes

1. The *Mail and Empire* was known for its Conservative sympathies and one of King's friends is still surprised he took a job with them. "He never talked to me about being a reporter," King's former secretary and confidant Jack Pickersgill, 86, says from Ottawa, "but I remember being very surprised that he would write for the *Mail and Empire* considering what a Tory organ it was." Maybe economics had something to do with the abandonment of King's partisanship.