



RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTS

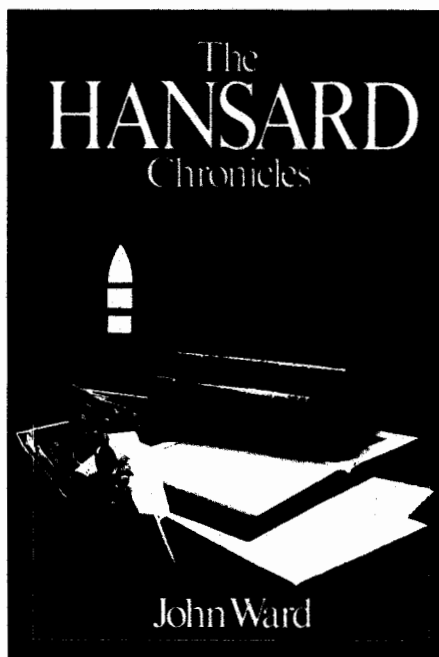
The Hansard Chronicles: A Celebration of the First Hundred Years of Hansard in Canada's Parliament, by John Ward, Deneau and Greenberg Publishers Ltd., 1980, 243p.

On Wednesday, May 7, 1980, the first hundred years of the Canadian *Hansard* were commemorated by the unveiling of a memorial plaque in the Rotunda of the Parliament Buildings. A few minutes later, in the House of Commons Madam Speaker read a congratulatory message from Queen Elizabeth. The Queen expressed her confidence in the continuing impartiality and accuracy of an institution which she called indispensable and incorruptible.

Publication of the *Hansard Chronicles* by John Ward, Associate Editor of *Hansard*, is another event in the celebration of the unique and essential service so quietly and so ably performed that it is often taken for granted while the more colourful parliamentary procedures catch our attention. The author recognizes this anomaly as he opens his book with delightful humour, contrasting the visible ceremonial pomp of the Speaker's parade with the "solemn procession of one" taking place in the corridor one floor above. The Hansard reporter makes his way to the Chamber to take his place in the centre isle "unnoticed, almost a part of the furniture."

Every spoken word in the House of Commons is written down, printed and published. Though we may now take our *Hansard* for granted as we

often do the freedoms we enjoy in a parliamentary democracy, this survey of the history of parliamentary reporting shows that Canadians were not always so fortunate. The book provides an account of the struggle for freedom for parliamentary reporting in the legislature. It highlights the obstruction of the Family Compact and other members of the establishment in the Canadas and the Maritimes in the early 19th century and pays tribute to the newspapermen who were in the vanguard of the movement for reform.



Mr. Ward's history of *Hansard* begins with a short biography of William Cobbett who was a crusading journalist, printer, and one of those who endured "prison, fine and exile" to secure freedom for the press in both the United States and Great Britain. Cobbett's *Parliamentary Debates* were summaries published on a weekly basis in England from 1803 onward. His printer, Luke Hansard, took over the publication of the *Debates* in 1812 and renamed them *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*. From that time until 1888 the Hansard family produced the reports of parliamentary debates in Great Britain. These reports, however, were copied from newspapers of the day; it was not until 1909 that the British *Hansard* was modelled after the official system of complete reporting which was established in Canada in 1880.

Many fascinating figures appear in the *Hansard Chronicles*. Robert Gourlay, John Carey, Daniel Tracey, Ludger Duvernay and several others fought for the right to take notes and publish reports of legislative proceedings. It is Francis Collins, however, whose career as parliamentary reporter and newsman is dealt with most extensively. Indeed, as the author notes, "the story of Francis Collins goes far beyond the confines of a narrow specialized profession; it embraces fundamental principles of free speech and liberty of the press, sheds light on an era crucial to the development of democratic institutions, and provides a chapter of personal courage in the face of adversity."

Beginning with this issue the CANADIAN REGIONAL REVIEW will publish regularly a list of books, articles, documents and special compilations likely to be of interest of parliamentarians. Certain books will be reviewed and important documents may be summarized or reproduced in full if space permits. In this issue only federal documents have been included. This will be expanded in the future to cover provincial legislative documents as well.

The link between the efforts of newspapermen to achieve freedom of the press and the reporters who transcribe a verbatim account of parliamentary debate is a vital one for the author. It was newspapermen who fought to have the words expressed in parliamentary debate made public and available to all people whom legislators represent; and it was newspapermen who first learned the skills of shorthand and were, therefore, the first parliamentary reporters.

Mr. Ward conveys a warm personal appreciation for the work of all the various "toilers in the vineyard" from the first Chief Reporter to those who presently carry on in the great tradition. His list of Hansard reporters includes outstanding Canadians such as the former prime minister John Thompson and the well-known authority on parliamentary procedure, John George Bourinot, but does not fail to include all the others whose long period of service marks them as a very special group of people. As the special plaque commemorates, they wrote shorthand in the cause of their country during the first one hundred years of *Hansard's* service to the House of Commons. Mr. Ward asks, "Who knows what Hansard has yet to offer the nation?"

Nora S. Lever
Executive Assistant to
the Clerk of the House
of Commons
Ottawa

What Have You Done For Me Lately? by
Jeremy Akerman, Lancelot Press, Windsor,
Nova Scotia, 1977, 84p.

Although not a recent work this little book published by a member of the Nova Scotia Legislature deserves to be better known, particularly among parliamentarians. Mr. Akerman claims he wanted to write a brief handbook to explain politics and politicians to the average person but in fact he has done much better. In a few pages he captures with remarkable wit and clarity the joys and frustrations of ordinary parliamentarians. He knows the exasperation of the provincial politician who is stopped

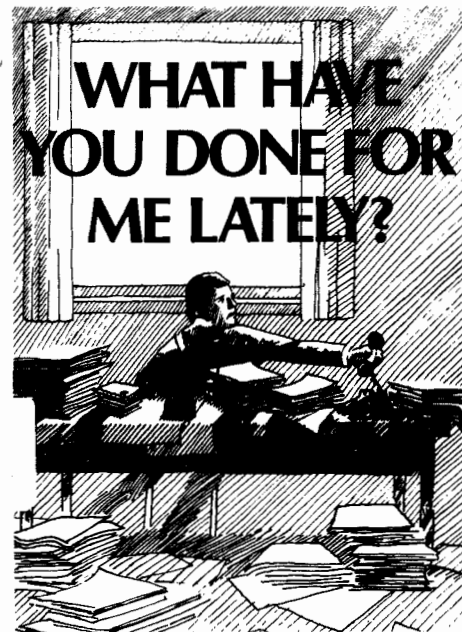
on the street in mid-summer and asked by an angry constituent why he is not in Ottawa. He can sympathize with the federal member who spends hours driving or flying home only to find himself being condemned for actions of a municipal council of which he is not even aware. But, there are also touching moments in politics as when an old age pensioner, with tears in her eyes, offers a crumpled dollar bill to thank her representative for having solved her problem.

Mr. Akerman spends some time discussing his parliamentary colleagues who he divides into several different categories including the "Statesman", a type so rare he has no personal experience with them. Other types are the "Partisan" who is blind to the virtues of anyone but himself and to arguments other than his own; the "Orator" who is able to entertain or devastate according to the occasion; the "Nightwatchman", who can deliver a lengthy speech saying virtually nothing, on any subject under the sun, thus gaining valuable time for his colleagues to gather their material and their wits.

Mr. Akerman has a warm spot for the person holding the office of Speaker. He or she is supposed to be totally objective and impartial but like all humans the Speaker is subject to human frailties. The author illustrates the point by giving two examples of Speakers called upon to cast the deciding vote because of a tie. One Speaker took the traditional approach saying he would vote in favour of a controversial bill introduced by Akerman because that would allow for consideration at a future time. Another Speaker broke a tie in favour of the administration and added "I think the government is doing a fine job!"

The most serious chapter in this book is the one dealing with the question of whether a Member of Parliament should follow the dictates of his conscience or the wishes of his constituents. Akerman clearly favours more scope for the individual member to speak and vote as he pleases rather than as he is expected to by his party or even by his constituents. This is particularly true on moral or what he calls "lifestyle" issues such as abortion.

Like many politicians Mr. Akerman does not have a very high opinion of the press. He shows how mischievous their use of headlines or their tendency to take things out of context can be. What are "crowds" for their favourite is merely an "audience" for the man they dislike. For one candidate there are "masses of people" but for the other only "a handful of party faithful". He gives a personal example of this kind of journalism. After a meeting in Antigonish during the 1970 election campaign the story read "Mr. Akerman, whose expensive imported English tweed suit contrasted sharply with the plain garb of his tiny audience, said the NDP was the party of the little guy." The suit in question, he says, was bought off the peg in a Sydney store for about \$100.



In his concluding chapter Mr. Akerman evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of being a politician. The work is interesting and varied with an opportunity to travel around the province or the country. On the other hand he laments a loss of privacy. The real disappointing element, however, is when those you have helped turn against you. "Some of the people on whose problems the member has spent the most time and effort may be the very people who are working hardest against him in the next election. This is democracy, but it still hurts." The reward in public