

Research for the book was done according to the following method as explained in the introduction. For each member they started from parliamentary records and information found in them. The editorial team then searched through a wide variety of biographical dictionaries, local histories, obituaries and newspapers. If contradictions were found they were checked against primary sources such as official publications, and archival material. The family or descendents of members were contacted, particularly the person most familiar with family history. For deceased members certificates of birth or baptism, marriage and death were obtained. The book includes, at the end of each biography, a partial list of the sources or collaborators involved.

Even short biographies (such as Gosselin's with 66 words or Meikle's with 91 words) manage to convey essential information. The longer ones, like those of Laurier and Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, take more than two columns. Yet all are concise without digression into anecdote, commentary or character analysis. One has only to look at the entries for René Lévesque, Claire Kirkland-Casgrain and others to grasp this point. For even the most notable parliamentarians there is no attempt to outline their political thought or evaluate their role in political life. Of Luc Letellier de Saint-Just it merely says he dismissed the Conservative government of Boucher de Boucherville on February 25, 1878 then was relieved of his post as Lieutenant-Governor on July 25, 1879. Maurice Le Noblet Duplessis is given one column consisting mainly of dates and facts without embellishment or commentary of any kind. For Jean Lesage there is not even a mention of the "Quiet Revolution".

In certain cases sentences or phrases can say a lot without undermining the objective framework of the work. Thus we learn Armand Lavergne was expelled from the Liberal Party by Wilfrid Laurier in 1907; Pierre Laporte was kidnapped by the FLQ on October 9, 1970 and his body was found in St-Hubert eight days later. Gérald

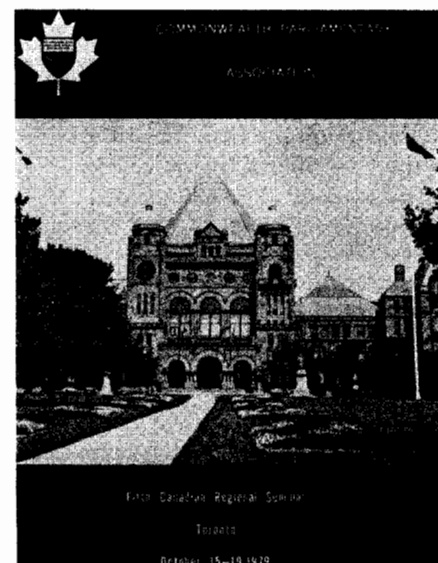
Martineau was called before the Salvus Commission and found guilty; Camilien Houde was interned from 1940 to 1944 for his opposition to conscription.

The *Répertoire* is limited in its objectives to the presentation of strictly factual material and as a result it is a difficult book to review. Nevertheless, one method is to compare it to the *Canadian Directory of Parliament 1867-1967* published by the Public Archives of Canada. A quick comparison reveals not only that information in the *Répertoire* is more complete but one quickly notices a number of errors in the *Directory*. About 160 parliamentarians are found in both books and the latter contains so many mistaken birth dates, forgotten second marriages, incorrect names of wives, dates and place of death, that one is led to conclude the *Directory* is in need of revision. (To be fair, however, it must be conceded that the *Directory* was a pioneer work containing more than twice the number of entries. It was mainly concerned with information regarding careers in Parliament, political affiliations and constituencies represented. It continues to be a useful reference source in these areas.)

The *Répertoire* includes a number of interesting appendices including lists of general elections, by-elections, legislatures and sessions, Lieutenant-Governors, Speakers, Prime Ministers, Leaders of the Opposition, Presidents of the Legislative Council, Members of the Legislative Council, Members of the Executive Council (Cabinet) and candidates elected and defeated in all Quebec elections up to 1979.

In publishing the *Répertoire* the Library of the National Assembly has made a significant contribution to political and parliamentary documentation in Canada. The editor-in-chief, André Lavoie, and his team are to be congratulated.

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Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Fifth Canadian-Regional Seminar, Toronto, October 15-19, 1979, 217 pp & appendix 73 pp.

This is a difficult publication to review. It comprises five background papers and over two hundred pages of transcribed discussions on the topic of legislative committees. While the focus is fixed mainly on Canadian experience (and here principally on MPs at Ottawa and MPPs at Toronto), the experience in other jurisdictions, especially Great Britain and the United States, is discussed frequently enough to make the study a work in comparative legislative behaviour as well.

However, the volume's scope and especially its manner of presentation detract from the importance the subject deserves. Quite clearly, as they are discussed here, there are committees and, then again, there are committees. Those that examine Public Accounts or Statutory Instruments are vital elements of the parliamentary system but their experiences, here and abroad, are described as qualitatively different from the experience of standing and select or special committees. The contrast, of course, is that while their manner of operation and degree of success in fulfilling varied terms of reference may differ from legislature to legislature, their *raison d'être* is seldom questioned. The same cannot be said of those other committees whose relationship to the bureaucracy who serve them, the execu-

tive who seeks to direct them, or the political parties who select their membership is almost constantly in dispute. The participants in these discussions are unanimously unhappy with the way this latter group of committees operate.

On the evidence of this volume a verbatim record of the seminar discussion is a mixed blessing for those who did not attend the meeting. The sense of immediacy is conveyed well enough but it is immediacy in the presence of a lengthy and occasionally wandering discourse. With the exception of the background research papers, the rest of the discussion is best described, in the words of one participant, as "fluid". In this context, fluid too often means repetitious, tedious and aimless. It is for this reason that those sessions of the seminar devoted to committee work on public accounts or statutory instruments are welcome. As well, comparisons drawn by visitors from the United Kingdom and the United States between their experience and what they have heard of Canada prove memorable. For instance, the British system, which in contrast to Canada has displayed in recent years less discipline on the part of party leaders and more independence on the part of individual members, reminds the reader how distinctive the Canadian system is despite its institutional similarities to that of Great Britain.

In his description of how Congressional committees work, Dr. Walter Kravitz, senior specialist in the Congressional Research Service, underlines the need to consider the whole of the political system when studying its parts: "What does all of this have to do with committees? Everything. The fundamental character of the committee system of the United States Congress is deliberately fashioned to meet these kinds of [partisan] circumstances. Because of the constant battle between the President and the Legislature committees are swung into line as major cannons in the battle. Committees give the Congress the kind of expertise it must have. I've heard discussion here about the usefulness of expertise, and how nice it would be. For the American Congress there is no option. This is an absolute necessity" (p. 93).

In the remarks by outsiders then there is a home truth which frequently seems to be overlooked, or at least underestimated, by Canadian parliamentarians. The committee system here, just as in London or Washington, "springs out of the roots of our experience...and we pay costs. We have benefits, but we pay for everything" (p. 89). Canadian committees behave the way they do because the executive sits in Parliament and in the provincial legislatures. As elsewhere, the government seeks to dominate public life. But here they succeed most of the time because parliamentary life is infused with partisanship. It is true that some, maybe much, of the business before committees can be conducted with minimal partisan rancour but that is not the significant fact. What matters is that when dissent or disagreement emerges, the partisan whip lies to hand. In Canada, where distance displaces doctrine, loyalty to the party leader is tested in committee as well as in caucus. The benefit of this system is confident government; the cost has become attenuated national parties.

The scattered intervention by legislators from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia, among others, reminds the reader that there is a world of legislative experience outside Toronto and Ottawa. The comments suggest that it is a very different world. How different remains for another seminar, or better still, a book to elucidate.

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A SELECTION OF PUBLICATIONS

Report on the Twenty-First Meeting of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group, May 23-27, 1980, Canada, Senate Debates, July 15, 1980

Report of The Select Committee of the Alberta Legislative Assembly on Workers' Compensation, (Bill Diachuck, Chairman) Edmonton, April 1980, 91 p.

Report of the Special Committee on Privileges of the Yukon Legislative Assembly (Tony Penikett, Chairman) Whitehorse, 23 October, 1980.

Report of the Select Committee on Ontario Hydro Affairs: The Safety of Ontario's Nuclear Reactors (Donald MacDonald, Chairman) Toronto, June, 1980.

Report of the Select Committee on Constitutional Reform of the Ontario Legislative Assembly (John MacBeth, Chairman) Toronto, October 21, 1980.

How Parliament Works, by John Berjeremi, Borealis Press, Ottawa, 1980, 62 p.

Parliament, Policy and Representation, edited by Harold Clarke, Colin Campbell, F.Q. Quo and Arthur Goddard, Toronto, Methuen, 1980, 325 p.

Women in National Legislatures, by W.S.G. Kohn, New York, Praeger, 1980, 249 p.

"The Minister and the Mandarins", by Flora MacDonald, M.P., **Policy Options**, vol. 1, no. 3, (September-October, 1980)

"The Public Accounts Committee: A Successful Select Committee?", **Parliamentary Affairs**, vol. 33, (Spring 1980)

"How Provincial Legislatures Work", by Russell Wilkins, **Policy Options**, vol. 1, no. 3, (September-October, 1980)

