

Remembering our founding editor: *A tribute to Gary Levy*

The *Canadian Parliamentary Review* is very sad to report the passing of its founding editor, Gary Levy, 71, after a brief battle with cancer. Born in Saskatoon, he was an avid football player in his youth. He excelled in school and eventually completed degrees at the University of Saskatchewan and Carleton University, before earning a Ph.D. in Political Science at Université Laval. Before settling into his career with the Government of Canada, Levy spent an exciting year in Paris that coincided with the student riots in 1968 (where he learned the sting of a French gendarme baton). Returning to Canada, he started work at the newly created Research Branch of the Parliamentary Library in Ottawa. Soon, he took on the editorship of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, which he grew from a simple newsletter into a leading Canadian journal on parliamentary practice. Transitioning from a civil servant to a contractor permitted Levy the freedom to explore many other interests, including: being a clerk to Senate of Canada committees, organizing seminars, accepting various university teaching assignments, and studying desktop publishing in New York (where he later returned for a year as the resident Canadian Fellow at the Americas Society). In his retirement, Levy was an avid cross-country skier and cyclist who loved exploring the Gatineau Park. He even found time to contribute pieces to the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, including a book review published in our previous issue. The editorial board of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* is deeply grateful to Gary Levy for his decades of work with the journal and for the opportunity many of us had to work with him and to get to know him personally. In this tribute, Gary William O'Brien, a former Clerk of the Senate, Clerk of the Parliaments, and editorial board member of the *CPR*, reflects on his friend's career and legacy.



Gary William O'Brien

I first met Gary in the late 1970s when he worked under Philip Laundry in the Research Branch of the Library of Parliament and I was with the House of Commons Journals. I immediately recognized him as someone who truly understood the workways of parliament. If we could compare him to others in our parliamentary history, who not only had an insider's view but also increased our understanding through their writings, Arthur Beauchesne would come to mind. In fact, Gary was much attracted to Beauchesne (Beauchesne was a former Clerk of the Canadian House of Commons and author of the eponymous procedural manual) and wrote a four part mini-biography of him

in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* in 1985-86. Gary described Beauchesne as "an outstanding student," "a prolific writer on parliamentary topics," "a sought after public speaker," who "participated in the great political debates of his time" and who "from the beginning saw parliament from the perspective of a presiding officer." Many of these same attributes could be applied to Gary himself. If there is a difference, it was that Gary was more a scholar than a journalist. Perhaps a more appropriate comparison would be Alpheus Todd (a pre-and-post Confederation librarian, author and constitutional historian) or Sir John George Bourinot (the first Clerk of the Canadian House of Commons and author of an important early Canadian work on parliamentary procedure). Regardless, Gary's place is among the giant intellectuals of Canadian parliamentary history.

Gary William O'Brien is a former Clerk of the Senate, Clerk of the Parliaments, and editorial board member of the Canadian Parliamentary Review.



Gary has left behind a valuable collection of published writings for all students of parliament. They deal with such matters as prorogation, fixed election dates, the confidence convention, the evolving Speakership, the parliamentary budget officer, parliamentary reform, Senate modernization and the summoning and swearing of witnesses.

Gary, however, was not just an observer. As a Research Officer, and later as a Senate Committee Clerk, he threw himself into his assignments and made important contributions to the Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons (the McGrath Committee), the Senate Pearson Airport Committee and the Special Senate Committee on Euthenasia and Assisted Suicide.

As editor of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* for more than 30 years, he travelled and attended innumerable parliamentary conferences and was often on the phone seeking out contributions from MPs, senators, staff and academics. Under his guidance and with the support of the Clerks of the House of Commons and the Canadian branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the

Review grew from a simple newsletter into a leading journal on parliamentary issues. He also imparted his knowledge as a university professor at the University of Western Ontario, the University of Ottawa, and the University of British Columbia. Recently, he was Visiting Scholar with the Bell Chair in Canadian Parliamentary Democracy at Carleton University.

Later in his career, he taught courses on the Canadian political system at universities in the People's Republic of China and became deeply involved with the Canada-China Friendship Society.

I very much admired Gary and spent many hours with him playing golf and chatting over long lunches. I was also deep in the trenches with him during the Pearson Airport inquiry. Many of his co-workers have commented on his kindness, his genuine interest in those around him and his sense of humour.

I am very much saddened by his loss. He was a true gentleman. As Paul Benoit, his dear colleague through these many years has said, "The Parliament of Canada has lost a close, longtime friend."