

Editorial

Newly elected parliamentarians and staff used only to have to learn one new set of jargon: the rules and procedures of the assembly. Today members not only have to master the vocabulary of procedure but find themselves surrounded by all manner of high technology including equipment and gadgets intended to make their working lives easier and more productive.

Some would argue such technology leads to a variation of Murphy's law (the greater the equipment available for assistance, the greater the need for assistance to use the equipment!), however, the majority of members seem grateful for the new computers and other technology available to them.

Unlike the huge data-processing computers of the 1960s which were, often depicted as the culmination of industrial society's belief in the worthlessness of the individual, the mini and micro computers and word processors have fostered different attitudes. Personal computers have the potential to serve the needs of the individual and act as a creative and liberating force.

Technology also has a tendency to reorganize existing relationships and create new patterns of co-operation. It has the potential to alienate, frustrate and spread confusion as well as to organize. Well-conceived high tech projects may fail to achieve either efficiency or the benefits of co-operation if not implemented humanly and sensibly. The internal and technical soundness of a plan is insufficient to ensure success without careful thought to the capabilities and needs of the persons involved.

The computer also can give administrators the most accurate and up to the minute control of organization ever achieved. While there is a natural tendency for computer systems to enhance centralized control, parliamentarians are highly individualistic with a wide variety of needs. Some may use high tech for office management, others to search databases and find information for speeches. Others might prefer no such equipment at all but an equivalent amount of money to be used to hire extra personnel.

Whether systems are centralized or decentralized great care must be taken to balance the problems of incompatibility of equipment on the one hand with the danger of locking oneself into a single vendor or even a single model of hardware on the other.



Contents

Time for a Parliamentary Experiment	2
Steve Charnovitz	
Microcomputers in the Library of Parliament	4
William G. Stiles	
A Speaker Looks at Parliamentary Reform	7
Hon. John Bosley	
Life of Beauchesne: I The Young Journalist	10
Gary Levy	
The Association of Parliamentary Counsel in Canada	16
Michael Clegg	
Changing Perspectives: Interviews with Patrick Binns, Raymond Garneau and Michael Cassidy	18
Reports on Legislative Activities	25
Recent Publications and Documents	32
Crossword	35
People	36
So you think you know Parliament?	40

Inside cover: The Task Force on Reform of the House in the office of the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, Benjamin J. Guthrie. Standing (l-r) Jack Ellis, André Ouellet, Albert Cooper, James McGrath (Chairman), Benno Friesen, and Bill Blaikie. Seated: Lise Bourgault.