

## FOCUS ON ... QUEBEC

In New France, there were no representative assemblies, nor were there any in France at that time. New France was administered by a body called the Supreme Council created in 1663 which comprised the Governor of New France and of the Bishop who jointly appointed five councillors. From 1665 onwards, the Administrator of the colony was added to this political and judicial body. After the British conquest, the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763 raised the possibility of convening a general assembly of "Freeholders"; but the Governor of Quebec did not think it would be wise to do so, in view of the reluctance of the so-called new subjects who were, moreover, excluded from it by The Test. Therefore, the new British colony was administered by a Governor supported by a Legislative Council that was completely devoted to his Excellency. In 1774, the Quebec Act increased the number of legislative councillors to twenty, abolished The Test, but made no reference whatsoever to any future elected assembly.

The English merchants and citizens were dissatisfied with a system which did not give them the same advantages as their London counterparts. The arrival of the American Loyalists increased the pressure and even the French-speaking elites were won over to the cause and regarded the setting up of an elected House as an excellent tool to defend their rights.

The pressures increased and, in 1791, the Constitutional Act, which divided the Colony into two provinces, established for each of them a system of government consisting of a Governor appointed by the King, assisted by a Legislative Council appointed by the King, upon the Governor's recommendations, and an elected Legislative Assembly. Thus, Quebec had its first parliament, the Parliament of Lower Canada. From 1792 to 1833, the Assembly held its sessions in the chapel of the Bishop's Palace. At that latter date, it moved into new premises built at the same location.

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An article by Mr. Christian Comeau, Research Officer,  
Inter-Parliamentary Relations, National Assembly, Quebec

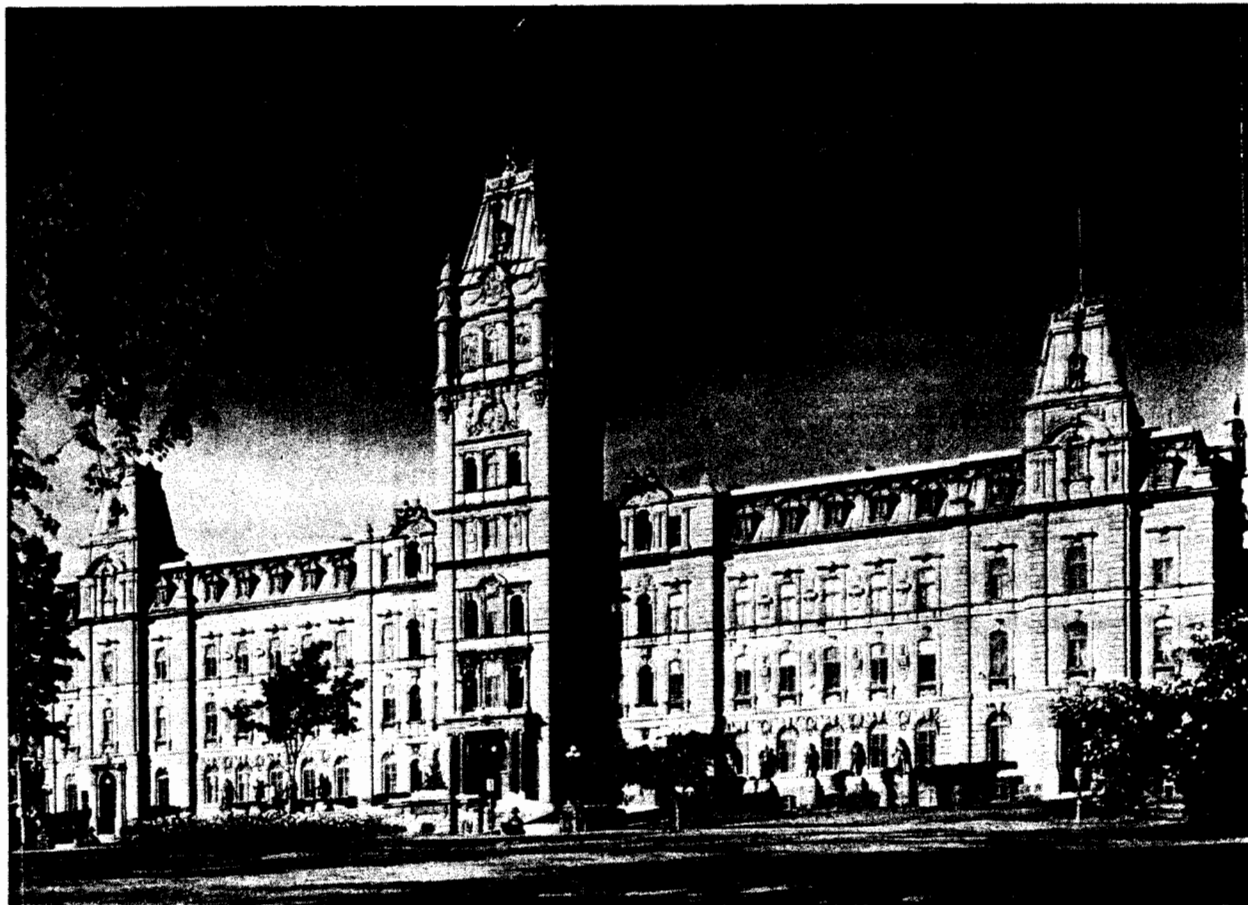
## THE UNION AND THE TRAVELLING PARLIAMENT

In 1840, the Union Act reversed this evolution and Lower Canada ceased to exist. Quebec lost its parliament which was replaced by a travelling parliament. After holding its sessions in Kingston (1841-1843), the Union's Parliament tried to settle down in Montreal, in 1844, only to be driven from it in 1849 by a fire. The Assembly moved to Toronto in 1850, where it remained for one year only and came to sit in Quebec City from 1852 to 1855.

Back in Toronto, in 1858, the Honorable Members of Parliament decided to put an end to this rotation. Consequently, in 1859, Quebec City was chosen as temporary capital from 1860 to 1865, and Bytown, which was to become Ottawa, was chosen as permanent capital.

The Confederation gave back to Quebecers their own Parliament and Quebec City was able to regain its title of capital.

Since 1867, the evolution of the Parliamentary system in Quebec progressed steadily. The traditions as a whole and the spirit of the system have been respected, however, the institution continued to progress. The Legislative Council was abolished in 1968, without any protest, and the Legislative Assembly became the National Assembly. Today, after thirty-one legislatures, Quebec's Parliament along with parliaments of the same kind, is faced with the same problems and challenges, which although they are serious, are not regarded as endangering that institution which proved its capacity for change and adaptation.



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, QUEBEC

Among the latest innovations, we must emphasize the establishment, on a trial basis, of set dates for the beginning and the end of the annual sessions; a new schedule which gives the House Friday off, which makes it possible to set up a new procedure, the Question with debate, during which a Parliamentary Commission can study a department's specific policies, without requiring the tabling of a Bill on the subject. Furthermore, as of the beginning of the next session, on October 3, the Assembly's proceedings will be broadcasted on television.

### CONFERENCE ON THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

In our latest issue, we informed our readers that the Quebec National Assembly will host, from October 11 to 14, a full-fledged conference on the British parliamentary system. We were told that the preparations for that conference are making good progress. It is worth recalling that it was the Speaker, the Hon. Richard, who had taken the initiative of suggesting this event in February, during the Regional Council's Meeting, at which time the suggestion was unanimously accepted. The Quebec Branch and its administrative secretary, M. Paul Trotier, immediately started to work on it.

Not less than ninety-two (92) parliamentarians from all the legislatures in Canada are expected. Representatives from the United States House of Representatives, from Great Britain's House of Commons and from France's National Assembly have been invited, along with representatives from the C.P.A.'s Secretariat, from the International Association of French-speaking Parliamentarians and from the National Conference of State Legislatures

### AGENDA

The following is the list of the speakers and of the subjects which will be dealt with:

#### TOPICS: The British Parliamentary System: An Anachronism or a Modern Reality?

Mr. Michael Rush,  
Professor at Oxford  
University's Exeter  
College

#### The French Parliamentary System:

Mr. André Chandernagor,  
M.N.A.,  
Member of the French  
National Assembly

#### The American Parliamentary System:

Mr. Floyd M. Riddick,  
Former member of the Senate  
and Adviser to the Com-  
mittee on Rules and  
Administration of the  
United States Senate

### WORKSHOP "A"

Do Members of Parliament still have a role to play as legislators?

- Mr. John M. Reid, M.P.,  
Member of the House of Commons
- Mr. Réjean Pelletier,  
Professor at Laval University's  
Political Science Department

### WORKSHOP "B"

Can delegated legislation, with or without control, become a standard method of government?

- Mr. Neville Johnson,  
Professor at Oxford University,  
Nuffield College
- Mr. Gary Levy,  
Director of the Library of  
Parliament's Research Branch.



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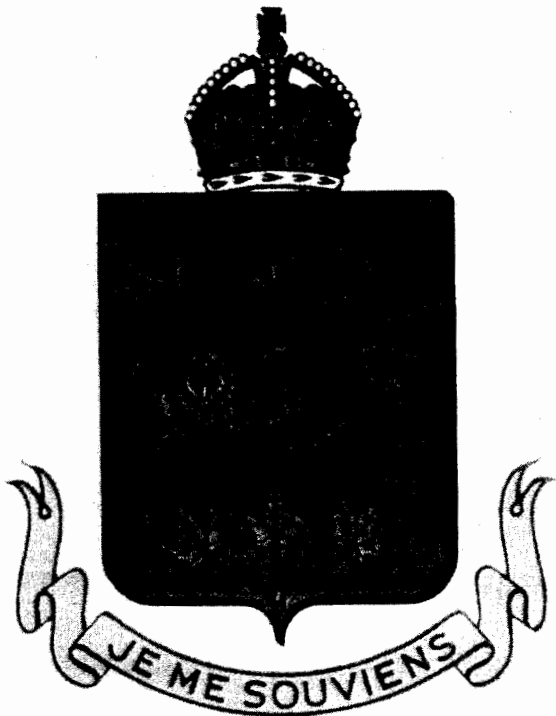
## WORKSHOP "C"

Can a Member of Parliament effectively control the operation of the public administration?

- Mr. Paul Fox,  
Dean of Toronto University's  
Erindale College
- Mr. André Bernard,  
Professor of the Political Science  
Department of the University of  
Quebec in Montreal

## SUMMARY AND PROSPECTS

- Mr. Léon Dion,  
Professor at Laval University's  
Political Science Department.



## QUEBEC CITY: MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE CLERKS-AT- THE TABLE OF CANADA

The annual meeting of the Association of Clerks-at-the-table of Canada took place in Quebec City from August 9 to 12. All the Canadian legislatures were represented at that conference, with the exception of that of Prince Edward Island. Mr. Patrick E. Flahaven, Secretary of the Senate of Minnesota and president of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries was the guest of honour. Mr. Flahaven was accompanied by his wife and his five-year-old son, participants, has the makings of a future clerk.

In the course of their debates the clerks proceeded to elect a new executive. Thus, Mr. Henry Muggah from Halifax succeeds Mr. Doug Blain from Manitoba as president; Mr. Pierre Duchesne from Quebec City was elected vice-president and succeeds Mrs. Gwenneth Ronyk from Regina. Mr. Ian Izard from Victoria will act as Secretary, thus replacing Mr. Jacques Lessard from Quebec City. The new president, Mr. Muggah, is also Chairman of the Drafting Committee of this magazine.

During the proceedings, the Clerks examined several aspects of parliamentary life, including the question of the ratification of laws in the Yukon, recent amendments to the National Assembly's Standing Orders, problems raised by an equality of seats between two Opposition parties parliamentary privileges in Saskatchewan, the Question Period's procedure, and other subjects submitted by the participants.