



## Recent Publications

*Canadian Constitutionalism 1791-1991*, Edited by Janet Ajzenstat, Canadian Study of Parliament Group, Ottawa, 1992.  
*Dictionnaire des parlementaires du Québec*, Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1993

These two books originated out of celebrations marking the bicentennial of the *Constitutional Act, 1791*. The collection edited by Professor Ajzenstat includes essays by a number of well known historians, lawyers and political scientists. Half the articles deal with historical aspects of Canada's constitutional development including a re-interpretation of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council by Paul Romney, a look at American Influences on Canadian Constitutionalism by Constance MacRae-Buchanan and an essay on the constitutionalism of Etienne Parent and Joseph Howe by Professor Ajzenstat.

She notes that there have always been two political ideologies among reformers in Canadian politics. The first exemplified by Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie is the "democratic" stream while the second, exemplified by Parent and Howe she calls the "constitutionalist" stream. The story of Canadian politics, up to 1982 at least, is the triumph of "constitutionalists" over the "democrats". She makes the point that our present obsession with the need for "democracy" is neither new nor indeed a particu-

larly effective formula for the successful governance of Canada.

The conference for which these papers were prepared took place in November 1991 in the midst of constitutional discussions that eventually led to the Charlottetown Accord. So it is not surprising that many contributors focused on contemporary aspects of Canadian constitutionalism. The usual themes were discussed. For example, Leslie Seidle examined the problem of Senate Reform, Alan Cairns looked at the impact of the Charter on Canadian politics, F.L. Morton and Rainer Knopff suggest that the Supreme Court has become the most important political institution in the country, David Bercuson and Barry Cooper call for recognition that the people not the Crown are now sovereign, Hugh Thorburn points out the danger of interest group politics.

In many respects the most practical contribution was by Douglas Verney who not only reviews the theoretical difficulty in merging British style responsible government and American style federalism but calls for a new constitutional doctrine to be known as "Responsible Federalism". The key institution would not be the elusive reformed Senate or the thrice discredited First Ministers Conference but a Federal-Provincial Council composed of Ministers of Intergovernmental Affairs supplemented by knowledgeable MPs and MLAs drawn from all parties. The Council would be a permanent body and it would not be chaired by the Prime Minister. Verney suggest

the Governor-General and the Lieutenant-Governors as more appropriate officials to chair the Council. Before Canadians return to constitutional discussions, as they surely will one day, they should give serious thought to the issues raised and the proposals suggested in the Verney article.



The Dictionary of Quebec Parliamentarians is quite a different book. It is a collection of biographical sketches of every legislators who sat in the Lower Canadian House of Assembly from 1792-1838, every member from Canada East in the old Parliament of the United Province of Canada 1841-1867 and every Quebec legislator since 1867. The dictionary also contains biographies of members of the Legislative Council from 1792 until its abolition in 1968.

The Dictionary is a revised and updated version of a similar publication prepared in 1978 and revised in 1987. Quebecers have always taken their parliamentary tradition seriously and the new edition is the latest in a long line of useful research and reference books produced by the National Assembly.

Gary Levy