



# Recent Publications and Documents

**SPEAKERS' RULINGS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, NEW ZEALAND**, edited by C.P. Littlejohn, Wellington, New Zealand, 1982, 143 p.

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PRACTICES**, edited by J.A. Pettifer et al, Canberra, Australia, 1982, 966 p.

Two books have recently been added to the list of procedural texts from those countries which are modelled after the British form of parliamentary government. The first, from New Zealand, is an update of rulings by the Speaker of the House of Representatives while the second, from Australia, is a first attempt at codifying the practice of parliamentary procedure in their House of Representatives.

The first work, in the form of a handbook, was edited by the Clerk of the House of Representatives, C.P. Littlejohn. This edition covers the period from 1969 to 1980 with many deletions from the earlier versions being made obsolete by several changes to the Standing Orders. This printing has a revised format with appropriate headings and sub-headings being inserted with their corresponding references to the current Standing Orders. Unfortunately for the outside reader, the Standing Orders are not reproduced as an appendix to this otherwise fine document.

The book is arranged by procedural topic in alphabetical order. Each important Speaker's Ruling is summarized in six or seven lines with a reference to where the ruling may be found in the parliamentary papers. The rulings are numbered consecutively for each page. At the end of the publication there is a very detailed index which should prove quite invaluable in the interpretation of the text — over 40 pages of indexing for 130 pages of rulings!

The second book, *The House of Representatives Practice*, is edited by the Clerk of the House of Representatives, J.A. Pettifer, ably assisted by several members of his staff. It is a massive treatise on parliamentary procedure as practised in the lower House in Australia, written in a style

similar to that ever popular text from the United Kingdom — Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*. However, within its 966 pages the reader will find more than just procedure. Included is the history of parliamentary government in Australia. Of particular interest to students of political science is the very detailed account of the constitutional crisis of 1975 when the Governor General refused a request for an election but instead summoned the Leader of the Opposition to form a government. There is also a chapter dealing with the topic of Parliament and the citizen which discusses the important issues of communication in a democracy, the problems of informing the electorate and the ways by which citizens can inform and influence members. Throughout are various pull-out graphic charts depicting, amongst other things, the progress of a bill, classes of bills and the Supply timetable. The book concludes with some 29 appendices, the Constitution, the Standing Orders and a very complete bibliography of not only national but international references. However, as the Editor stated, much of this could be eliminated in later editions but it was necessary to include them in the first edition as most of the information was not available elsewhere. Also inserted within this edition are several coloured photographs of the interior and exterior of the Parliament Buildings.

There are some interesting differences between the Canadian and Australian parliamentary procedures. The Question Period, that sacred part of our daily proceedings, is fixed at 45 minutes by our Standing Orders but in Australia its length is determined solely at the direction of the Prime Minister. It could be one hour or even not held depending upon the viewpoint of the Government.

The time that the bells are permitted to ring to call Members to vote is limited to two minutes in Australia, a time limit that is accurately measured by a sand glass sitting on the Table. This rule is certainly more stringent than our method of either a 15-

minute or unlimited period of time for the ringing of the bells.

It is interesting to note that their system for obtaining Supply differs slightly from the Canadian practice. In the House of Representatives, the Budget is brought down on a fixed day in August (their winter) with the actual Budget Speech by the Treasurer being his speech introducing the Appropriation Bill at Second Reading. Whereas in the House of Commons, the Minister of Finance brings in a Budget whenever he deems it necessary and, of course, with a six-day debate ensuing.

When the Government of Australia wishes to impose a time allocation in their House, a Minister simply introduces a motion for such, without notice, and a twenty-minute debate follows with each Member speaking not longer than 5 minutes. This is in contrast to the Canadian experience of one day's notice followed the next day by a two-hour debate with 10-minute speeches.

When the Editor set out to write this book he was given several objectives to achieve and, judging by the final product, one is certainly assured that he has met his goals as this treatise appears to be not only an excellent reference guide for Members but also a good reference for the public in educating them in the role and functioning of the institution of Parliament. It is an easily readable and, at times, entertaining book.

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**CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY HANDBOOK/ compiled by John Berjmi, Borealis Press, Ottawa, 1982, 517p.**

The publication of the *Canadian Parliamentary Handbook* marks a milestone in the history of parliamentary biography in Canada. This book is the first completely bilingual directory of Senators and Members of Parliament to be issued in Canada. All other similar biographical directories are available as either completely unilingual