



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

English publications such as the *Canadian Directory of Parliament, 1867-1967*, or are currently only partially bilingual like the *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*.

As a bilingual register of Canadian federal parliamentarians the *Canadian Parliamentary Handbook* is an important book. However, this first edition lacks the consistency and accuracy to be considered important overall. The organization and presentation of information is excellent. The side by side bilingual format is efficient. The heading approach to each biography is clear and easy to read. But the editorial control is somewhat inconsistent. Information is often incomplete, sometimes out of date or even lacking altogether.

The *Handbook* provides basic biographical data concerning the Governor General, Senators and Members of the House of Commons. All information applies to the current Parliament. In addition to the parliamentary biographies, the register describes the roles and responsibilities of senior officials of the Senate and the House of Commons. In all cases a photograph accompanies the biography of parliamentarians. With one exception there are photographs of each senior official of Parliament. The inclusion of photographs in Parliamentary biography is not new in Canada – both the *Assemblée nationale du Québec*, (1981) and the *Canadian Construction Association's Legislative handbook* include the photographs of elected officials. The *Canadian Parliamentary Handbook*, however also includes photographs of all Senators at the time of its publication.

The presentation of information is its strongest point. Readers used to long strings of unrelated information found in most biographical dictionaries will be pleased to find a workable and efficient alternative in the *Handbook*, which uses bold-face type headings to organize information. These headings include: name of the Member/Senator, date of birth, education, profession, parliamentary service, committee service, marital status, spouse, children. A description of the make-up of the constituency is generally included for elected members. Presumably because constituency offices are officially unique to elected members, the address information is organized differently for Members of the House of Commons and Senators. The *Handbook* provides only parliamentary addresses for Senators; no home addresses are listed. The telephone number listed is the one for the Parliament Hill office. In the case of elected Members, the parliamentary, constituency and home

addresses are listed. Corresponding telephone numbers are provided with the parliamentary and constituency address.

Three elements follow the biography of each Member of the House of Commons: election results for the 1979 and 1980 general elections where the Member ran in both those elections; the population of his electoral district; the geographic and legal description of the district as found in the *Canada Gazette*. Although this information is available elsewhere, it appears to be a handy compendium for the student wishing to quickly check various election results, or the constituent wanting to know the boundaries of a particular electoral district.

The basic problem with collecting information from other sources is to ensure that it is timely. It is unfortunate that the population counts in the *Handbook* are based on the 1976 Census and not the Census for 1981. For example, Terrebonne is listed at 103,213 persons while the 1981 count is 136,651; Beaches is listed at 80,008 while the 1981 count is 73,174.

While the text of the biographies is clear it is sometimes uneven and inconsistent. The descriptions of the individual electoral districts vary from ten lines with complete linguistic, ethnic and industrial descriptions, to one uninformative line, and in 19 of the first 114 cases examined, no constituency information at all! Of the ninety Senators listed in this book, only twenty-six biographies list year, month and day of birth. There is no list of abbreviations and the use of abbreviations is inconsistent i.e.; Qué. and P.Q., for Québec. Dates are sometimes written out in full, sometimes in numerical characters only. Under the heading Committee service, the *Handbook* does not always distinguish between special, standing, and joint committees. Under the heading of ministerial appointments, the exact day and month of the appointment is not always provided. The same is true of the appointments of parliamentary secretaries. This lack of consistency and accuracy can be frustrating – especially if the user relies solely on it to verify facts or to obtain greater biographical detail on a particular Senator or Member of the House of Commons. It is hoped that the text will be revised with a view to issue timely, accurate and constant information in future editions.

For a 500 page book limited to the Federal scene, the introductory article on the Canadian parliamentary process is too short and too simplified. By contrast, the articles on the Governor General and the various administrative structures of Parlia-

ment are taken directly from the book *Organization of the Government of Canada, 1980*, and add no new information. The editor would have done well to incorporate parts from the 1982 edition of *How Canadians govern themselves*. The fact that little comment is made on recent constitutional developments is disappointing, especially given the book's article, the "Commemorative edition of the Constitutional Parliament of 1982".

A book like this needs an index – and none is provided. If the editor continues with this format, a less expensive edition is recommended – the heading approach lends itself to a loose-leaf format more readily updated. The lists of telephone number of the various services of the Senate and House are not of much use and certainly subject to the vagaries of continual change.

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WEDNESDAYS ARE CABINET DAYS by Russell Doern, Queenston House, Winnipeg, 1981, 206 p.

Books written by practicing politicians provide difficult subjects for review. Several sorts of questions arise. Should we judge such books by the standards normally applied to more academic writing, or should we look perhaps for first-rate journalism? Can such books tell us things about the political process which we are unlikely to learn from other sources? Are most performers in politics poor observers of the process? Do they focus on the superficial and more sensational events, while ignoring the wider context and more routine dimensions of political life? The process of government does not take place in one location and at one point in time and a given individual cannot arrange to be present for all significant events. Should insider accounts be questioned for this reason? Is the political process overlaid with myths to which the participants themselves subscribe and are such myths reflected in their writings? Is there a tendency to over-personalize events and to exaggerate one's own contribution to the outcomes? One recalls the response of a backbench MP to his wife's question: – What do you do all day in that place? "I legislate, that's what I do," he replied. The story reveals the gap which often arises between what people say they do and what is actually the case.

My own view is that books by politicians, if well done, can provide valuable