

# Editorial

# Contents

In this issue David Mitchell offers a glimpse of British Columbia's Legislative Assembly during the days of the late Premier W.A.C. Bennett. Mr. Bennett had little use for techniques like question period or special committees which are held in such high esteem by modern students of Parliament. Bennett did not even believe in *Hansard*! It is tempting to dismiss his views as quaint or *dépassé* but Bennett makes such an eloquent defense of the old ways that it gives pause to present day reformers.

Notwithstanding Mr. Bennett's opinion about *Hansard*, most parliamentary assemblies (even British Columbia) now find a verbatim record of the debates essential to their day-to-day operation. The question then arises as to how to produce it most efficiently. In this issue the Chief of *Hansard* in Ontario, Peter Brannan, looks at the application of word processing and computer technology to the production of *Hansard*. It is safe to predict that more and more sophisticated hardware is going to be available to legislatures for their various information requirements. The problem for members and staff will be to purchase the appropriate level of technology for a particular job. This requires a solid understanding of what Parliament is supposed to accomplish as well as some resistance to "pie in the sky" promises of computer salesman.

The articles by George Moody and Stan Hovdebo, show that even elected members do not agree about the role of the backbencher. Some believe that members are elected to Ottawa or the provincial legislature to participate side-by-side with the government in the law-making process. Others argue that parliamentary institutions, unlike Congressional ones, are not designed to give the private member much in-put into law-making. As a result the backbencher is most effective when acting as an "ombudsman" for his constituents or a spokesman for his electors. These articles will not resolve the debate, but they do present the two sides of the argument.

For several years now some interesting comparative studies on Canadian legislatures have been produced from a most unlikely source — the Office of the Administrator of the Ontario Legislative Assembly. What began as a modest attempt to provide comparative data about salaries has grown into an annual compendium of useful data about various aspects of legislative proceedings. The 1982 study included a chapter of the role of the Speaker which we are reprinting in this issue.

Legislative drafting is not a very glamorous activity yet poorly drafted laws can cause all kinds of problems and expense to the unsuspecting citizen or corporation. Poor translations of federal statutes add to the confusion since English and French versions are accorded equal status under the *Official Languages Act*. The article by Alexandre Covacs examines the task of putting documents and statutes into proper (as opposed to technically correct) French. To many it sounds even more tedious and thankless than legislative drafting. But there are probably few public servants who attack their work with more gusto and dedication than the linguists and lawyers of *le groupe de jurilinguistique française*.

Finally, for those who have been working so close to Parliament that they have become discouraged, frustrated or cynical, we are publishing an article by Ruth Wilson on the Canadian Youth Parliament. It seems that parliamentary government, despite its problems, is still worthy of emulation, at least to a small, but enthusiastic group of young Canadians.



The Positive Role of a Government Backbencher . . . . .	2
George Moody, MLA	
The Role of the Private Member of Parliament . . . . .	4
Stan Hovdebo, MP	
The Good Old Days? W.A.C. Bennett and the Legislative Assembly . . . . .	6
David Mitchell	
The French Jurilinguistics Group of the Department of Justice . . . . .	10
Alexandre Covacs	
Computerization of Ontario Hansard Reporting Service . . . . .	12
Peter Brannan	
Youth Parliament of Canada: An Experience in Citizenship . . . . .	16
Ruth Wilson	
The Speakership in Canada . . . . .	20
Robert J. Fleming and J. Thomas Mitchinson	
CPA Activities: The Canadian Scene . . . . .	25
Recent Publications and Documents . . . . .	26
What's in a Name . . . . .	29
Reports on Legislative Activities . . . . .	30
People . . . . .	38
Index to Volume 5 . . . . .	41

Front Cover: Premier W.A.C. Bennett and members of the British Columbia Legislature  
(Jim Ryan Collection, 1960)