



THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER IN THE PARLIAMENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH, by Philip A.C. Laundy, London, Quiller Press, 1984, 274 p.

Philip Laundy, with the generous support of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, has written a book concerning the development of the Speakership in member nations of the Commonwealth.

Despite the transition from colonial to independent status of many countries the Commonwealth, the parliamentary system inherited from the United Kingdom, has usually been retained (although to varying degrees depending upon circumstances in each country). There is, however, one common thread throughout and that thread, which continues to link the many diverse nations together, is the Office of the Speaker. It lies at the heart of the parliamentary system and that is the basic thesis of this book.

At the outset, Mr. Laundy reviews the historical perspective of the Speakership in England from 1377 to the twentieth century. This chapter is basically a condensed version of his earlier work; *The Office of Speaker*. He traces the evolution of the Speaker's role and powers established by the concerted actions of the various occupants of the Chair.

In Part Two, the reader is introduced to the Speakership of some 40 countries which comprise the Commonwealth Nations. In each case Mr. Laundy describes the evolution of their Speakership from the moment of its inception, to the present. Needless to say for the larger, more longer developed nations, the narrative is extensive in contrast to that of the smaller, newer members of the Commonwealth. In each the Speakership is examined within the following context: the evolution of the office,

its roles, powers and responsibilities; Speakers' election in the country and subsequent election in the House; and political affiliations. For those nations that have provinces or states, brief notes about their Speakers and differences are commented upon.

Many interesting facts and practices are included in this book. In the United Kingdom chapter, there is considerable discussion of the tradition of not opposing a Speaker at either general elections or elections in the House of Commons. Another distinction between Canadian and Westminster practice is that the retiring Speaker in the United Kingdom presides over the election of his successor while in Canada this role is performed by the Clerk of the House.

In Australia the Clerk, while presiding over the election of a Speaker, has certain powers not existing elsewhere in the Commonwealth including a casting vote, ruling on the admissibility of a motion and calling for the withdrawal of offensive words. Also, from Australia comes the example of the government failing to support the authority of the Speaker after he had named a member (who was Minister of the Crown). The House defeated a motion for the Minister's suspension, whereupon the Speaker resigned.

At the Lok Sabha in India, the Speaker has powers that quite exceed those of our Canadian Speaker. He can regulate the proceedings of the House, determine the day and hour of sittings and assist the House Leader in determining the order of business.

In the remaining pages in very rapid succession, the author makes mention of the African parliaments from Zambia to Zimbabwe. From here, he moves quickly to

the Office of Speaker of Sri Lanka and Singapore then to such diverse nations as Belize, Malta and then finally to the smallest but perhaps the oldest of all, the Isle of Man.

As Mr. Laundy threads his way through the various parliaments from Westminster to the Tynwald, there emerges one fundamental idea. Although the Speakership may not be identical in all nations it remains essentially faithful to the original model of Westminster. That is perhaps one reason parliamentarians in all Commonwealth nations are able to identify readily with their counterparts in other nations.

This book makes interesting general reading for students of parliamentary government and is essential for those studying the Parliaments of the Commonwealth.

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POUR UN MODE DE SCRUTIN ÉQUITABLE: LA PROPORTIONELLE TERRITORIALE, Commission de la représentation électorale, Quebec City, 1984, 199 p.

The idea to reform Quebec's electoral system did not come from a particular political party: it has roots in the very history of Quebec's political system. The origins of these reports go back to a resolution of the National Assembly requesting the *Commission de la représentation électorale* to study the existing electoral system and make recommendations if necessary. The Commission tabled its report on March 28, 1984, entitled *Pour un mode de scrutin équitable* (For a fair electoral system).

Although not the first report to be