

minority position in white society would be enshrined in law.

The Commission's report maintains that the chief merit of territorial representation is that it would decrease significantly the proportional discrepancy between the number of votes cast for a party and the number of seats it actually wins. This is undeniable, at least as regards the two main political parties now represented in the Assembly. Distortions would persist, however. The winning party would in effect still receive a bonus, and outside the major urban centres, parties that obtained less than 15 per cent of the votes would not be represented.

In a constituency like Montréal-Est, for example, a party would need to obtain only 5 per cent of the votes cast to win a seat, whereas in most other constituencies a party would have to obtain as much as 33 per cent of the votes cast to win that one seat. But the Commission's proposal was not made thoughtlessly. In its report it says explicitly that the larger number of members it would like to see in certain densely-populated ridings is due to its wish to allow Quebec's pluralism to find expression by making it easier for new ideas to be represented in the National Assembly, without causing governmental instability.

To manage to stay afloat in a system based on territorial proportionalism, a new or third party would have to concentrate all its support in a single region, probably one characterized by strong cultural, social or linguistic homogeneity, like West Montreal. The Commission failed to propose any means of taking into account, on a province-wide scale, the residual votes garnered by a political party. The result would be that only regional parties would benefit, to the detriment of parties seeking support throughout Quebec. Proportional representation on a territorial basis thus would not really eliminate the distortions generated by single-ballot uninominal balloting; it would only dilute them.

The Commission also opposes the right of MNAs to decide to become independents during the course of their term. It suggests that in such a case the member would have to resign and be automatically replaced by the non-elected candidate on his party's constituency list who had received the most votes. The same procedure

would be invoked each time a seat came vacant. By-elections would be a thing of the past.

The Commission justifies this due to the need to preserve a certain stability in government. Because party representation would be more accurate, government majorities would be much smaller, and the defection of a handful of members could be enough to bring down the government. Nowhere in the report, however, does the Commission assess the consequences of this change on political and parliamentary life.

On the issue of independents the Commission is not really consistent with its own recommendations. By opting for an open list system it would allow the electorate to choose their representatives themselves, but at the same time it denies members the right to change allegiance. We cannot have it both ways: either the voters simply choose a political party, and MNAs are forbidden to switch sides during their term; or the voters pick from an open list, at which point a vote for an individual candidate is no longer equivalent to a vote for a party, and each MNA is entitled to a large measure of autonomy.

The Commission's proposal with respect to changes of allegiance would also appear to contravene article 43 of the National Assembly Act, which stipulates that "every member is vested with full independence for the carrying out of his duties". Marcel Adam summed it up when he wrote in *La Presse* of December 3, 1983, "What good will it do people to be more accurately represented in the National Assembly if the parliamentary system is going to go on being kept in handcuffs by a partisan solidarity whose quasi-dictatorial rigidity is virtually unparalleled among parliamentary democracies?"

The parliamentary committee empowered to consider the report of the *Commission de la représentation électorale* is scheduled to meet during the second week in October and will certainly have to examine all these points. We can only hope that it will succeed in clarifying the debate and answering some of the questions.

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REPORT ON ALBERTA ELECTIONS 1905-1982, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Edmonton, Alberta, 1983, 204p. LEGISLATORS AND LEGISLATURES OF ONTARIO 1792-1984, compiled and edited by Debra Forman, Research and Information Services, Legislative Library, Ontario Legislative Assembly, Toronto, 1984, 3 volumes.

These are both reference books intended to provide authoritative information on various aspects of provincial legislative history. The Ontario study is a much more ambitious project in part because the province has twice as long a legislative history. The three volumes contain chronological lists of the legislatures of Upper Canada, Canada West and the Province of Ontario. For each legislature there is an alphabetical list of both members and constituencies. The guide is supplemented by numerous appendices including a chronological list of all legislative officers, Premiers and Executive Councillors, over a period of 192 years.

This project constitutes the Research and Information Services' contribution to the Bicentennial of Ontario (which for reasons not explained in the book is being celebrated in 1984 rather than 1992!).

The only criticism of this project is that it gives too much information rather than risk omitting any fact. Thus the same basic information is presented two or three different ways. Too much emphasis went into the collection of information and not enough thought was given to questions of format, presentation and readability. Although these volumes will overwhelm all but the most dedicated researchers they will provide a great service to serious students of Ontario history and politics.

This criticism certainly does not apply to the book on Alberta elections which, admittedly, does not have the same objectives. Nevertheless, it does provide much of the same information (albeit for a shorter period) and it does so in a simpler and more attractive format. Indeed the handsome, hard cover book produced by the Chief Electoral officer would make an ideal gift to anyone even slightly interested in Alberta politics. It contains a mine of information about provincial elections, by-elections and major plebiscites since Alberta

became a province in 1905. For each election a map or maps show the constituencies while an accompanying table gives the name of candidates, their political affiliation, the number of votes received and, in later years, the percent voting.

The book contains other interesting information for those who study elections. For example it shows the cost of elections in each electoral division for every election. The total cost of holding a general election

has risen from \$25,023.06 in 1905 to \$3,190,468.00 in 1982. The book also reveals that more than thirty parties have contested elections at various times in Alberta history; that there have been only eighteen acclamations in all the general elections since 1905; that in 1913 one MLA (C.W. Cross) ran as a candidate in both Edmonton and Edson, won both and represented both in the legislature; that the \$100.00 deposit required when nomination papers are filed has remained the same since 1905.

No book on Alberta elections would be complete without some explanation of the system of proportional representation used for several years in that province. This is done by reprinting a document prepared by John D. Hunt in 1924 to explain the transferable Ballot and Proportional Representation adopted in the *Alberta Election Act*. In contrast to many recent studies written on the subject, Hunt provides a succinct explanation of this rather complicated procedure.

The Editor

Presidents and First Ministers

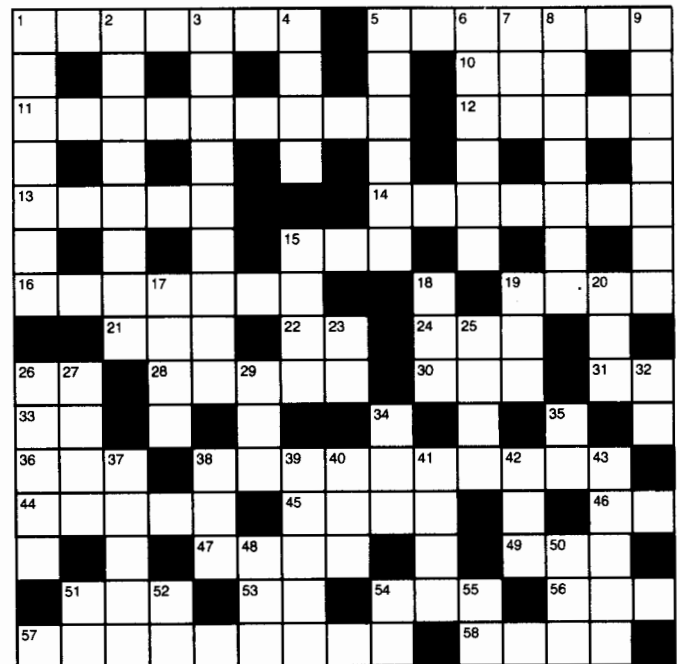
by Janet Uren

Across

1. PM twice but only for about 10 months
5. Political choice
10. Dung beetle
11. Those finishing second
12. Represented by the Tapirisat
13. Of an ancient Andean civilization
14. Sentence
15. The _____ of the possible
16. Sixteenth president
19. Dawn (Fr.)
21. Black and _____
22. Negation
24. To elect
26. Provincial flower the dogwood
28. Within the law
30. Laurier's wife
31. Exist
33. Birthplace of President Grant (abbrev.)
36. Cul-de-_____
38. Nickname of Andrew Jackson
44. The Pendragon
45. Unsubstantial
46. Promotion
47. Hoover had only one
49. Nuclear _____
51. God (Lat.)
53. Preposition
54. Insect of the neuropterous order
56. "I like _____"
57. "_____ lives." Last words of John Adams
58. Makes an offer

Down

1. Repressive government
2. Nixon said he was _____
3. To go one's own way (3 wds)
4. Decree _____ (latin)
5. Anticipate
6. Adrianople, in other words
7. Deception
8. Northern Magus
9. Relaxed Tension
15. Wife of President Harrison
17. Demand
18. Dickins, pen name
19. Consumed
20. Woman's name (abbrev.)
23. Chemical suffix denoting alcohol
25. Only Speaker of House to become President
26. Shipboard non-com
27. Converse
29. A solid that quivers
32. Self



(Answers next issue)

34. Borden was last PM to be made one
35. Introducing an alternative
37. Dief the _____
38. Scrap of food
39. British pub game
40. LBJ's pet beagle
41. Printer's colour
42. Symbol of monarch's authority
43. Americans
48. Sensory organ
50. Tied or untied
51. Premier of BC, Amor _____ Cosmos
52. Belonging to
54. Article
55. Consumption