

# REPORTS ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES



## SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS

Among the highlights of the period under review (May-July 1981) were reports by two special parliamentary task forces established last year. The report of the Special Committee on Alternative Energy and Oil Substitution was tabled in the House by the chairman, **Tom Lefebvre**, on May 12.

The committee examined Canada's present hydrocarbon-based energy system and how that system might evolve over the next half-century. A number of alternative energy sources, (biomass, wind, solar, ocean, geothermal and fusion energy), technologies (heat pumps, fuel cells, co-generation, coal conversion, district heating, small-scale hydro-electric generation and non-conventional propulsion), and energy currencies or carriers (hydrogen and electricity) were considered. The main recommendation was that Canada move towards an energy system based primarily upon hydrogen and electricity with hydro-carbons to be almost completely displaced in the long term as

sources of energy. The federal government should be prepared to spend up to one billion dollars over the next five years to establish Canada as a world leader in hydrogen technology.

The committee recommended that a Ministry of State for Alternative Energy and Conservation be created under the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Resources. It further recommended that the new ministry be divided into four sections responsible for conservation, solar energy, methanol, and other alternatives. To promote the development of hydrogen systems in Canada, the committee also recommended that a commission, to be known as Hydrogen Canada, be established to act as a lead agency. Canada's new alternative energy corporation, Canertech, which is presently a subsidiary of the federal crown corporation Petro-Canada, should report to the proposed ministry of state upon becoming an independent crown corporation.

Among the committee's 65 recommendations, the development of alcohol fuels from biomass, research on electric vehicles (possibly based on a metal-air battery), thermal storage in solar systems and the development of small-scale energy systems for remote communities were also highlighted. Exploitation of Western Canada's oil sands was accorded an important but not pivotal role in future energy supply and the committee was squarely against coal replacing oil as Canada's principal source of energy in the next century. The committee recommended against coal liquefaction as a long term energy option for Canada but some liquefac-

tion plants could be developed provided they had stringent environmental safeguards. These would earn foreign exchange, generate skilled employment and technological expertise and provide a supplementary source of synthetic fuel in an emergency.

On June 22, **Jesse Flis**, chairman of the Special Committee on a National Trading Corporation, presented that committee's report to the House. The report noted that merchandise exports account for 25% of Canada's GNP, yet Canada has been losing ground in terms of its share of world trade — dropping from 4.9% in 1972 to 3.4% in 1979. Many Canadian manufacturers, capable of and interested in exporting, lack the financial and human resources to develop new markets. They have nowhere to turn for assistance. The committee's analysis of the existing situation led it to the conclusion that Canada needs a new kind of trading vehicle to take Canadian goods to foreign markets. After considering a number of alternatives it recommended that the federal government sponsor development of a Canadian Trading Corporation.

This corporation should take the form of a shared enterprise drawing financial strength and support from the public sector and a commitment to sound commercial practices from private owners. According to the report the role of the Canadian Trading Corporation should encompass both exports and imports; it should have the ability to trade in all products, including the export of capital projects; it should offer a complete set of general trade-

related services and it should concentrate efforts on the countries which constitute the growth areas for world trade.

The report also contained a number of recommendations designed to assist Canada's existing trading community. It called for improvements to market intelligence and policy information to give Canadian businesses and decision-makers access to the information they need to pursue export opportunities and develop trade strategies. Export financing and insurance schemes should also be modified to put Canadian exporters on an equal footing with their international competitors. Government programs to foster export growth should be rationalized to eliminate confusion and overlap. Innovative programs to promote export education and give businesses access to the services of trade specialists should be introduced.

The parliamentary task force on North-South Relations presented a supplementary report on May 14 in which it repeated recommendations made in its main report presented last December. The report, tabled by the chairman, **Herb Breau**, also informed the House of actions taken to inform Canadians about the problem of international development. The government's response to the report was tabled in the House on June 15 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, **Mark MacGuigan**. The same day a debate was held on the subject. It marked the first time the government had formally replied to a report of the special task forces.

### Other Committee Activity

The Standing Committee on Regional Development, chaired by **Irénée Pelletier**, asked for and received permission for a Sub-committee to spend about one week in Quebec to study the impact of policies and programs of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. The Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, chaired by **Robert Gourd**, recommended that the government consider asking the Auditor Gen-

eral to conduct a comprehensive audit of all CBC operations.

On June 23, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts examined the observations and recommendations of the Auditor General with respect to the organization of the House of Commons. The committee did not recommend any further changes in the recently re-organized administration although it noted the changes were still experimental at this stage. It will review the situation at the end of the fiscal year to determine whether satisfactory progress has been made by the senior management in achieving its objectives. It asked that an action plan and time-table for the implementation of policies and procedures recommended by the Auditor General be provided to the Committee so that progress can be monitored.

In a report to the House on June 15 the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments objected to the use of a dollar vote in an *Appropriation Act* to establish VIA Rail Inc. It called upon the government to introduce a VIA Rail Canada Bill to give Members of Parliament an opportunity to debate the future and structure of railway passenger services in Canada and the manner of their management and control. The committee claimed that the procedure used to establish VIA Rail violated one of the guidelines established by the committee and approved by Parliament, for the scrutiny of statutory instruments.

The Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, chaired by **Marcel Roy**, has been considering the 1979 report of the Canadian Commission for the International Year of the Child and it presented its report on July 8. The committee called for establishment of a Secretariat for Children's Affairs with ongoing responsibility for issues affecting children. It also recommended the convening of a federal-provincial conference on children's issues to deal with national standards for child care and adequate

funding of child care centres, national measures for child protection, and various programs to strengthen the family and promote good health.

On July 9 the Special Joint Committee on Official Languages headed by **Eymard Corbin** and Senator **Lowell Murray** presented a report. The committee is making an in-depth study of the operation of the *Official languages Act* since its adoption more than a decade ago. The committee noted that certain concepts contained in the Act, such as "significant demand" for French languages services are too vague and are being interpreted differently by different federal departments and agencies. It suggested the phrase "where numbers warrant" would be preferable. This would not leave the onus on the minority language group to formally request services in their language. The committee suggested that in the light of many departments' poor record for deciding which areas should have bilingual services, this responsibility should rest with the cabinet which would act on recommendations from the Commissioner of Official Languages. The committee also recommended that by 1983 all designated bilingual positions be filled by truly bilingual staff rather than the present practice of allowing unilingual staff to be appointed as long as they agree to take language training.

On June 30, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, chaired by **Maurice Foster**, presented its report on the subject matter of Bill C-237, an act to amend the *Canada Elections Act*. The main recommendation was that the government consider extending proxy voting privileges to accommodate more of those who are unable to vote on election day. The committee also called on the government to change the Act so that polls would be opened simultaneously and kept open concurrently in all time zones across the country. This change would alleviate situations whereby results of the elections from one area of Canada were being published in other areas before the polls closed.

## Legislation

In the two months before the summer adjournment several non-controversial bills and one highly controversial one went through both Houses and received Royal Assent. The non-controversial ones included, among others: an act to provide special early retirement provisions for Air Traffic Controllers; an amendment to the *Currency and Exchange Act* to permit the government to issue gold currency; a bill to promote oil conservation by offering grants to individuals and industries that convert to non-oil sources of energy; an amendment to the Canadian Home Insulation Program to assure that no new residential unit receives federal assistance if heated by oil unless no other reasonable alternative energy exists; a bill to implement an air transportation agreement signed by Canada and six other nations who have agreed to sever air links with any country that does not respect its international obligations regarding hijacking; a bill to provide a summer residence for the Leader of the Opposition; and a bill to increase the salaries of members of parliament and provide a new formula for future increases. The aforementioned legislation all went through the House with very little opposition. Only the bill to increase members salaries required a recorded vote. It passed by a vote of 159 to 10.

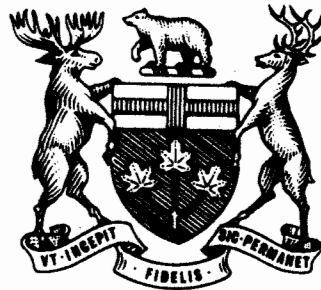
The controversial bill was C-57, which amended the *Excise Tax Act* and the *Excise Act* and provided for a revenue tax on petroleum and gas. The bill was reported back to the House by the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs in early June. No less than 135 amendments were proposed at this stage and even after the Speaker grouped them for purposes of discussion and debate, there were still about 45 motions to be disposed of. After several days debate the government introduced a motion to allocate time for the remainder of the report stage and for third reading. On June 19 at 9:00 p.m. members began voting on the motions, a procedure that took more than two hours and included

eleven recorded divisions. The bill received third reading on June 22 by a vote of 134 to 84.

## Adjournment

The usual motion to adjourn the House for the summer recess came in the midst of a nation-wide postal strike. The Official Opposition said they were prepared to keep the House in session as long as necessary to settle the strike. In a move unprecedented in Canadian parliamentary history, the government invoked closure to force a vote on its adjournment motion. Finally in the early hours of July 18 the motion was adopted and the House recessed until October 14.

### The Editor



## ONTARIO

On Friday, July 3, the first session of Ontario's Thirty-Second Parliament recessed for the summer. It was an unruly, factious session in which the after effects of the March 19 election (which returned the Progressive Conservative Government of Premier **William Davis** to a majority position after six years of minority rule) were evident. Symptomatic of the general rancour were several challenges to rulings of the new Speaker, **John Turner**; the naming of Opposition Leader **Stuart Smith** for refusing to withdraw remarks adjudged unparliamentary; divisions on first readings of bills; and a procedural dispute which resulted in the division bells being rung for seven hours until the House reached its normal adjournment time of 10:30 p.m.

## The Budget

In presenting his third budget to the legislature, on May 19, Treasurer **Frank**

**Miller** stressed that it was a "realistic fiscal framework" for encouraging private sector growth and maintaining the high level of services provided by the province. The Treasurer indicated that controlling the size of government and striking "a more appropriate balance" between revenue and expenditure were important priorities in the budget.

The budget speech detailed a number of previously announced economic programmes co-ordinated by the Board of Industrial Leadership and Development (BILD), such as energy development, transportation improvement and manpower training. The Treasurer also highlighted successes in the small business development corporation programme and announced several improvements to it, aimed at improving access to risk capital and managerial expertise for small business.

The Treasurer predicted a rate of real growth of 2.4 per cent in the provincial economy in 1981, up from a .2 per cent decline in 1980. In addition, he expects unemployment to fall marginally to 6.6 per cent of the labour force. The budget revealed that total spending for 1981-82 would increase by 12.2 per cent to \$19.4 billion. The projected deficit is \$997 million; in order to keep the deficit at this level, the Treasurer indicated that an additional \$603 million would be raised through new tax measures.

The principal tax increases were a four point rise in the personal income tax, from 44 per cent to 48 per cent of the basic federal tax; a 15 per cent increase in health insurance premiums; and increases in taxes on gasoline, beer and cigarettes, which are now to be taxed on an *ad valorem* (percentage of value) basis. Stating that he wished to maintain a favourable investment climate, the Treasurer did not increase corporate income or capital tax rates.

Liberal Finance critic **David Peterson** described the budget as "a singularly unimaginative document except in extracting money from the taxpayer's hide". In his reply to the budget, Mr. Peterson dismissed BILD as containing "not a single job creation target,

very few price tags and a few recycled ideas", and explained some of the proposals comprising his party's industrial strategy. Mr. Peterson also warned that the province was threatened with a serious fiscal squeeze as a result of funding recent deficits by borrowing from government pension plans. One implication of this policy, he said, is that the government finds itself raising taxes not to foster creation of wealth but to finance the province's debt.

**Bud Wildman**, the Treasury spokesman for the New Democratic Party, assailed what he considered the budget's guiding principles, "inequity and futility". He maintained that the government's economic policy does not deal with the serious structural weaknesses of the Ontario economy, particularly its branch-plant nature. Mr. Wildman cited former federal Finance Minister **John Crosbie's** appraisal of the budget as "a pretty grim concoction", and was particularly critical of what he considered a decline in social services resulting from government economic policy. The fundamental solution, he suggested, was "public sector development of our publicly owned resources".

One of the tax bills, arising from the budget, *The Gasoline Tax Amendment Act*, was the subject of considerable controversy and a lengthy debate in which thirty-three of fifty-five opposition members spoke during seven days of debate. Critics of the bill saw its *ad valorem* features as government "profiteering" on inflation and a reversal of the government's commitment to low energy costs. Discontent was also registered at the bill's provisions which would enable the government to alter the gas tax by regulation.

## Legislation

Among the more significant government bills before the House was the proposed new Ontario *Human Rights Code*. A similar bill had been given second reading prior to the election (and was summarized in an earlier issue of this Review). Public hearings were

begun on this bill in the Social Development Committee and are to resume in September.

Labour Minister **Robert Elgie** brought other important legislation before the House in addition to the *Human Rights Code*. One bill provided substantial increases to Workmen's Compensation benefits. Another bill improved severance pay (one week's wages for each year of service) for workers who lose their jobs in plant shutdowns, if more than 50 employees with at least 5 years of service are let go. Improved severance benefits had been the principal recommendation from the Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Employee Adjustment. While welcoming the legislation, opposition members criticized its limits, which leave many laid off workers without legal right to severance pay.

Bill 89, *The Consolidated Hearings Act*, streamlines the public hearing process required by such provincial statutes as *The Environmental Assessment Act*, *The Municipal Act*, and *The Expropriations Act*. A single hearing may now be held to consider various aspects of a project or undertaking in place of a series of hearings each dealing with one specific phase of a project.

A highly controversial bill was an amendment to *The Public Hospitals Act* which permits the cabinet to appoint a "hospital supervisor" to run a hospital in place of the local board if the cabinet feels such an appointment is "in the best interest of the public". The bill followed swiftly after the release of an independent report which made serious criticisms of the administration of a large Toronto hospital. Opposition members objected strenuously that the measure was an entirely unwarranted subversion of local autonomy in the operation of hospitals, conveying unusual power on the minister.

## Pay Raises

Shortly before the summer recess, amendments were passed to *The*

*Legislative Assembly Act* and *The Executive Council Act* granting increases to members. The principal changes were an additional \$5,500 in annual indemnity and \$2,000 in tax free allowance for all members, who now receive \$30,000 indemnity and \$10,000 allowance. Salaries and additional allowances for the speaker, ministers and party leaders were increased roughly \$2,000. Among the other changes, parliamentary assistants' indemnities were raised from \$6,500 to \$7,200 and committee chairmen now receive \$3,900 a year, an increase of \$600.

Some of these raises were above those proposed in the February report of the Commission on Election Contributions and Expenses. Government House Leader **Tom Wells** indicated during the second reading debate that an alternate mechanism was being considered for the next review of member's allowances and indemnities, although for the time being, at least, the Commission will remain responsible for the review.

## Committee Activities

As has been the case for a number of years, committees continue to do much of the detailed work of the Ontario legislature. In addition to conducting many hours of estimates debates, and holding public hearings on bills such as the new human rights code, committees continue to be involved in special studies. The Social Development Committee carried out a brief inquiry into the problems of urea formaldehyde foam insulation and produced a unanimous report encouraging the government to expand its testing programme and expressing grave concern at the lack of federal government action in response to the problem.

A less harmonious episode was the Justice Committee's response to the collapse of several provincially chartered financial institutions. Prior to the election, the committee had been engaged in a highly detailed scrutiny of this issue,

but opposition demands that the committee investigation be resumed were rejected, at least temporarily, by the majority of committee members.

All the previous-standing committees were carried over into the new parliament; six of eight are chaired by government members elected for the first time on March 19th. Two select committees were not renewed in the new parliament: the intensely political Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Employee Adjustment, and the well-known Select Committee on Ontario Hydro Affairs. Premier Davis did, however, express the view that a special committee on energy might be a worthwhile venture.

A new select committee has been struck to review the mammoth 10 volume report of the Royal Commission on The Status of Pensions in Ontario. Chaired by Prince Edward-Lennox MPP, **Jim Taylor**, the committee will sit throughout the summer grappling with what is emerging as one of the fundamental issues of the 1980's — pension reform.

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## QUEBEC

The first session of Quebec's 32nd Legislature was short. It started May 19th and ended June 18th, during which time the National Assembly sat seventeen days while parliamentary commissions convened forty-seven times.

In his opening speech, Lieutenant Governor **Jean-Pierre Côté** indicated that the April 13th general election saw the return of two party representation. This, he told members, would somewhat alter the operation at the National Assembly, but he was sure members would be able to maintain the climate of dialogue and efficiency which have always marked Quebec's parliamentary institutions. In fact, the government's legislative program and budget for the 1981-82 fiscal year were adopted in an atmosphere of calm without obstructions or lengthy night sittings.

At the start of the session **Claude Vaillancourt**, barrister and member for Jonquière, was again elected Speaker of the Assembly, while **Jean-Pierre Jolivet**, a union representative, was confirmed as Deputy Speaker. **Réal Rancourt**, a farmer and MNA for the county of St-François since 1976, was chosen as second Deputy Speaker.

## Inaugural Message

As dictated by tradition, the Inaugural Message was delivered by Premier **René Lévesque** who said that the second mandate of the Parti québécois would require an attitude of courageous realism by everyone. "We will have to sail cautiously the treacherous waters of the 80s", consequently, while maintaining and increasing the measures we have already adopted since 1976, we will also have to select all our new programs with the utmost care and with the knowledge that it is now unthinkable to keep adding them indefinitely to all those which already exist, as was the practice in the past."

Mr. Lévesque explained a program which centered on economic development, and the protection of the rights and powers of the province of Quebec. On the constitutional question, Mr. Lévesque reiterated that he would fight to the end in order to check the federal plan to unilaterally repatriate the Constitution. He said that under the guise of granting citizens a new charter of rights, the federal government was making an unprecedented attack on the

jurisdiction of the Quebec National Assembly which would limit and control it, specifically in the field of education.

The Leader of the Opposition, **Claude Ryan**, did not table a non-confidence motion against the government's policy but he listed the values he would like to see upheld by Quebec and its government. He committed himself to bringing them out repeatedly in future debates. He described as overly cheerful Mr. Lévesque's presentation on Quebec's economy and the role the government intends to play in that sector. In his opinion, it will be necessary to rely more upon the initiatives of business leaders and private sector workers to generate the economic activity and the many jobs Quebec needs. Commenting on the social and family aspects of the government's program, Mr. Ryan said that the government will have to ensure that its initiatives are part of an overall plan which had yet to be clearly outlined.

Finally, the member for Argenteuil said that it seemed to him reasonable and wise to wait for the Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the federal package before considering any other steps. He added that his party did not want a charter of rights which would be unilaterally imposed by one level of government, in this case the federal government, but believed that such a charter was a perfectly legitimate objective for a country with a federal system like Canada. Subject to hard-nosed negotiations regarding the definition of rights to be protected, it should be possible to work out a satisfactory political and moral foundation for the existence of an united country.

## The Budget for 1981-82

Following the debate on the Inaugural Message, the Minister of Finance, **Jacques Parizeau**, tabled his budget for 1981-82. Quebec's expenditures for this fiscal year will amount to \$20.02 billion, an increase of 12.8% corresponding to the inflation rate.

Budgetary revenues are expected to be \$17.05 billion. The Minister of Finance expects a surplus of \$980 million in extra-budgetary operations, which will reduce the deficit by the same amount. The budget operations deficit is estimated at \$2.9 billion and the total loans at \$2.74 billion. The Government will borrow \$1.1 billion from the *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec*, some \$400 million through the issuing of savings bonds and approximately \$1.2 billion from traditional financial markets.

## Legislation

Among legislation adopted during this session, there is (at last, some will say) the *Highway Safety Code*, a complete reform of the old Highway Code. Four ministers, including the current Minister of Transport, **Michel Clair**, have, in the last few years, been responsible for revamping the Code. Mr. Leclair remarked that his predecessors, Messrs. **Raymond Mailloux**, a Liberal, under whose authority this task had been initiated, **Lucien Lessard**, Pêquiste, who presided over the preparation of the preliminary draft and **Denis de Belleval** who was minister at the time of the final draft share the credit for this overall rewriting of the Code, the first since 1942. Implementation of the new *Highway Safety Code* will be staggered over the next few months. When the new regulations are enforced, they will be backed up by a publicity and information campaign.

The National Assembly also approved a bill which allows the *Société d'habitation du Québec* to administer an "Access to Residential Property Program" in compliance with a government commitment to this effect. This program covers existing housing and mobile homes. To be eligible, an applicant must have a child less than 12 years of age and never have owned a principal residence. He will be able to buy a single dwelling, a condominium or some form of co-op housing, at a maximum price of less than \$60,000.00. For duplexes and triplexes, the price will be increased to \$100,000.00 and \$130,000.00 respectively.

Government financial aid will be granted in the form of interest reduction on the first \$10,000.00, \$6,000.00 or \$4,000.00 of the mortgage loan according to whether it is a new or existing housing unit or a mobile home. For the first year, the government will assume all interest costs, for the second year, two thirds of these costs and for each of the three subsequent years, one third of these costs up to a maximum of \$5,500.00 for new housing unit, \$3,000.00 for an existing unit and \$2,000.00 for a mobile home.

An additional mortgage rebate of \$2,000.00 is provided upon the arrival of a second child and another \$4,000.00 for each subsequent child. According to the opposition, this program is substantially different than the one to which the government had agreed and it will not achieve the stated goal.

The Assembly gave second reading to Bill 15, an act to abolish mandatory retirement at age 65 or after a certain number of years of service with a firm. According to the sponsor of the bill, Dr. **Denis Lazure**, Minister of State for Social Development, this obligation constituted a discriminatory measure which it is time to eliminate. The opposition gave its consent in principle and the government hopes to have this bill adopted during the fall session.

Finally, a bill introduced by **Yves Duhaime**, Minister of Energy and Resources, proposes an amendment to the *Hydro-Quebec Act*, to provide this corporation with an authorized social fund of \$5 billion divided into 50 million shares, each having a nominal value of \$100.00 and to insure that these shares are part of the Quebec public domain. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Energy and Resources which will meet in September to hear witnesses and study the legislation.

## Tributes

On June 18th, a few hours before the session adjourned, the members on both sides of the House joined together in

congratulating Mr. **Gérard D. Lévesque**, the member for Bonaventure and House Leader for the Opposition, on the occasion of his 25th anniversary of parliamentary service. The Leader of the Opposition and the Premier both stressed the exceptionally dignified, courteous and efficient way in which M. Lévesque has represented his riding and his region in the Assembly as well as the contribution he has made to the quality of parliamentary work and political debates in general for a quarter of a century.

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## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Since the last report, the legislature continued to deal with the government's legislative programme and spending estimates for fiscal 81/82. The House adjourned on July 7 after a four month session and is not likely to reconvene before the end of this year.

## Legislation

During the last two months, the government introduced thirteen bills. During the same period, the legislature approved some twenty-five government bills. Three bills are still on the order paper. Of the government bills six could be classified as major policy statements, five as administrative measures, while two dealt with supply matters. The major bills included an amendment to the *Real Estate Act* which provides for

increased consumer protection in real estate sales. As well, the government was given its long awaited new *Financial Administration Act* which is intended to bring public sector financial management into the 20th century. British Columbians will now have recourse to new civil rights legislation. The province's drivers will face stricter regulations under new sections of the *Motor Vehicle Act* which were introduced but laid over until the session reconvenes. Finally, the legislature approved increased indemnities and expense allowances for MLA's as well as increased salaries for cabinet minister's, the premier, the speaker, and the deputy speaker. Also left on the order paper were amendments to the *Assessment Act* and the *Offence Act*.

During the period under review, seventeen member's bills were introduced. All remain on the order paper at first reading stage. While many of the member's bills were recycled versions of former attempts to influence government policy, some of the bills are relatively new. For example, **Gordon Hanson**, NDP member for Victoria, introduced a bill to found an Institute of Native Indian Languages in the province. **Barbara Wallace**, NDP member for Cowichan-Malahat, introduced a bill that would seek to regulate smoking in public places. **Rosemary Brown**, NDP member for Vancouver-Edmonds, introduced a bill designed to prevent sexual harassment. **George Mussallem**, Chief Government Whip and Social Credit MLA for Dewdney, introduced his **Compudsman Act** which is a bill designed to create an office of Compudsman with a mandate to reduce the social, legal, and financial loss to private citizens from the widespread use and abuse of computers. Few, if any, of the above bills are likely to become law

as the legislature has a tradition of ignoring member's bills.

Two private bills were approved by the legislature on June 15. The first, PR 401, is an *Act respecting Montreal Trust Company and Montreal Trust Company of Canada*. The second, PR 402, is entitled *West Kootenay Power and Light Company, Limited, Act, 1897, Amendment Act, 1981*. A third private bill, PR 403, entitled an *Act to amend the Vancouver City Charter* was introduced on May 29 by George Mussallem. It has not passed the committee stage. This bill, if passed, would give Vancouver a ward system for electoral purposes.

### Supply

The major activity of the legislature during this period centered around consideration of the government's spending estimates. The budgets for sixteen departments and agencies were approved in some 160 hours of debate after May 11. The process included some heated debates over policy differences between the Social Credit Government and the NDP opposition which resulted in 57 divisions in the Committee of Supply. Record level estimates, totalling over 6 billion dollars were finally approved on the final day of the session.

### Legislative Committees

While the media asserted that a major component of the legislature's committee system died of neglect, two legislative committees were active. The Select Standing Committee on Standing Orders and Private Bills, chaired by **Bruce Strachan**, Social Credit member for Prince George South, met four times and filed one report in this period. The Select Standing Committee on Public

Accounts and Economic Affairs, chaired by **Ernie Hall**, NDP member for Surrey, met five times and filed one report. The Crown Corporations Reporting Committee, chaired by **Jack Kempf**, Social Credit MLA for Omenica, did not meet during the entire legislative session but it should be noted that the House itself met on at least two mornings each week in addition to regular afternoon sittings thus giving some credence to Mr. Kempf's claim that there was insufficient time for committee meetings during the legislative session.

### The Speakership

Mr. Speaker Schroeder was required to deal with eight questions of privilege, five points of order, and two urgency motions under Standing Order 35. These procedures resulted in seven rulings of which three were challenged by Opposition MLA's and subsequently supported with the Government's majority. **Frank Howard**, NDP House Leader and MLA for Skeena, introduced Motion 16 on June 3 alleging that there was some delay in deciding a question of privilege, however the motion was withdrawn the next day. On June 30, Mr. Speaker was required to suspend **Robert Skelly**, NDP member for Alberni, for the balance of the day's sitting for refusing to withdraw an unparliamentary expression.

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