

Reviews

CANADIAN LEGISLATURES: THE 1985 COMPARATIVE STUDY. Edited by Robert Fleming and Michael Wiebe. Office of the Assembly, Queen's Park, Toronto, 1985. ISSN 0715 7118. C\$9.50.

While having fewer Assemblies than some Commonwealth countries, Canada, with its bicameral federal Parliament, ten provincial and two territorial Legislatures, is a veritable laboratory of parliamentary government. It has some 1,100 Parliamentarians and thousands of other persons working for the Assemblies as Clerks, secretaries, executive assistants, Hansard writers, messengers and librarians. Most members of the parliamentary community as well as outside students of Parliament will find something of interest in this volume, the sixth in a series which began as a much more modest publication in 1979.

Edited by the Administrator of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and his Executive Assistant, this year's study is mostly an update of information published in previous years. Such things as Members' indemnities, salaries, allowances and benefits, support services for private Members and administrative structures are outlined both descriptively and in tables. One learns, for example, that the House of Commons total staff decreased by 0.6 per cent during the past year, although the administrative side grew by 36 per cent and the departments coming under the jurisdiction of the

Sergeant-at-Arms decreased by 27 per cent. One learns also that the House of Commons has changed the composition of its management body by creating a Board of Internal Economy to replace the Commissioners of Internal Economy and at the same time increasing the number of Members to include representation from private Members of all parties.

The study makes no value judgements and relies largely on information volunteered by the various Legislatures. However, anyone familiar with parliamentary institutions will find lots of grist for the mill in the various categories and statistics. The section entitled "House Statistics" could also be called parliamentary trivia, but it might prove useful to academics and others interested in knowing the average number of sitting days in each Legislature or the number of public Bills passed per session.

Persons who have never seen earlier versions of this book are likely to be impressed by the work and ingenuity that must go into compiling this information. But this is not the only survey of this kind. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Association of French Speaking Parliamentarians and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association have all produced similar comparisons at one time or another. Perhaps some enterprising student should sit down to compare the comparisons to see exactly how accurate the information is. In any event, the concept is a good one and the editors deserve credit both for their perseverance and for their admirable lack of parochialism in continuing to feature non-Ontario scenes on the cover. This one is from Manitoba.

Those who have followed these publications over the years will be pleased with improvements to the format. More disappointing is the absence of original material such as interviews with the Speakers (1982), with the Premiers (1983), or the public opinion survey on attitudes toward Parliament (1984). In its place the 1985 edition offers only a brief extract from a speech (to the Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy which also financed the publication of this Study) by Dr Austen Ranney of the American Enterprise Institute comparing presidential and parliamentary democracies, and an entertaining but hardly profound piece by Frederic Jackman who counts all the seats won by Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats in both provincial and federal elections since 1970 to demonstrate, not surprisingly, that the Progressive Conservative party has become the dominant force in Canadian politics. Without some first-rate original material this publication is unlikely to continue receiving the kind of praise it has been accustomed to in the past.

Last year, *Canadian Legislatures* published comparable statistics for the pay and conditions of American state Legislators. That was a fascinating bit of work for it revealed that although at the federal level American Legislators are distinctly more influential actors than their Canadian counterparts, the same is not necessarily true at the state/provincial level. Indeed, Legislators in the larger provinces, and even in the smaller ones, appear to be much more important cogs in the political system than are American state Legislators. More Canadian-American comparisons are included in the 1985 study, but they shed little new light on the subject. In fact, readers may begin to think that notwithstanding certain "ideas, concepts and approaches which can be shared to the benefit of all parties", there is little to be gained by continuing these ap-

The key to the future may well lie in the foreword to this edition in which Fleming describes the Canada-U.S.A. Legislative project, a programme designed to bring together provincial and state Legislators to examine various areas of mutual concern. There is much talk about free trade in Canadian-American relations at the moment, but it is always treated as a strictly economic issue. North America is completely lacking the kind of transnational political institutions one finds in Europe and which are an essential framework for independent and sovereign nations wishing to pursue common policies. The next volume could perform a singular service by expanding its obvious interest in Canadian-American Legislatures into a feature on the operation of consultative Assemblies such as the Nordic Council, the parliamentary branch of the Council of Europe or the European Parliament which may one day provide a model for a more coherent approach to North American problems.

Dr Gary Levy
Canadian Parliamentary Review
Ottawa

V.