



# Recent Publications and Documents

**Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia (3rd Edition) by E. George MacMinn, Queen's Printer: Victoria, B.C., 1997, 376 pages.**

The Canadian census is decennial and so too, it appears, is the updating of *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia*. Neither is going to be read cover to cover, yet both are sure to be invaluable research tools.

Like its predecessor published in 1987 this is basically an annotated discussion of the Standing Orders of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly starting with Standing Order 1 and proceeding to Standing Order 120.

The book is divided into twelve chapters. The first eleven cover such things as regulation and management of the House, committees, petitions, questions, notice and unanimous consent, privilege and so on. Only two of these chapters, the rules of debate and proceedings on public bills begin with an introduction. The others jump right into the standing orders.

The last chapter entitled Officers of the House is organized somewhat differently. It is divided into several parts including private bills, the legislative library and the recording of debate. There is a non technical introduction to each. This approach makes the book easier to read and consideration should be given to extending introductions to all chapters in the next edition.

At the end of the book one finds ten "Practice Recommendations" relating to various standing orders. Although there is no explanation as to the status or origin of these one assumes they are guidelines intending to clarify certain aspects of the Standing Orders.

For example Practice Recommendation 7 states that "A Member wishing to raise a question of privilege should, as a matter of courtesy, give the Speaker notice in writing within a reasonable time before raising the matter in the House." This relates to Standing Order 26 which says "Whenever any matter of privilege arises it shall be taken into consideration immediately.

One wonders why such seemingly innocuous practice recommendations were not incorporated into the Standing Orders. There may be an interesting story here but the reader is left in the dark.

The book also includes eight appendices including two Summaries of Amendments to Standing Orders. One is from 1930 - 1984. The other, for the years 1986-1996, has the changes shown in bold type. It is interesting to note how Standing

Order 1 was amended. It clarified that in unprovided cases the customs and precedents of first the British Columbia House and second the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland should be fol-

lowed as far as they may be applicable. The rules and practices of the Canadian House of Commons which were not mentioned before the amendment are still not mentioned! One wonders if this has more to do with "western alienation" than with good procedure.

In the appendices there is also a copy of the *BC Constitution Act*, and the *Legislative Assembly Privilege Act*. The most interesting appendix is on matters ruled breach of privilege. Thirteen examples of breaches of privilege are drawn from British Columbia and other Commonwealth Parliaments including Canada. Other examples that have been found not to be breaches of privilege are also included.

While it is easy to see the usefulness of such an Appendix to presiding officers and table officials, the

same cannot be said for the Appendix on "Closure of Debate in the New Zealand House of Representatives." There does not seem to be anything particularly unique in the two dozen short extracts from debates some of which go back to 1931. Nor is there enough context to get an idea of the issue under discussion. It is a shame that an important issue like closure is treated in this curious way.

The Editor