

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
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REPORT ON COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

SECOND CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR

OTTAWA, ONTARIO NOVEMBER 18 - 22, 1974

In 1973 the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association organized the first Canadian Regional Parliamentary Seminar, which was held in Ottawa, and invited the Council of the N.W.T. to send an observer to it.

As a consequence, Council, you will recall, agreed in January, 1974 to apply to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for approval to establish a branch. The Executive of the Canadian Main Branch, in anticipation of final approval of this application later in the year, authorized the extension of an invitation to Council to send a delegation of three Members to the Canadian Regional Conference, held in Toronto from August 11 to 17. At the June session a delegation was selected consisting of Air Marshal Campbell, Willie Adams and Bryan Pearson to attend this conference.

It was originally intended that a delegation to the Second Parliamentary Seminar would be selected during the October session. The cancellation of this session resulted in the delegation selected to go to Toronto being asked to represent Council at the Seminar as well. Members were advised of this by letter in November.

A Parliamentary Seminar is a working exercise at which the majority of the time available is devoted to consideration of various matters, largely of a procedural nature. The assistance of highly qualified resource persons, usually Members of the House of Commons, is made available for the benefit of delegates. Some social events are arranged for the delegates at lunch and in the evenings, but the major emphasis is on the business of the Seminar.

The only legislatures not represented this year were New Brunswick and the Yukon Territory, because of the elections underway in both areas. Most were represented by a three member delegation, five of which were lead by the Speaker of the House concerned. As usual, the Federal Parliament (Senate and House of Commons) was represented by ten delegates.

In contrast to the First Parliamentary Seminar when the discussions centered on an analysis of replies to a major questionnaire, this year's deliberations instead covered five major subject areas relating to the work of parliament.

In some cases a very complex subject was divided into a number of sections, each one dealt with separately.

The introduction of each major subject (or section of a particularly complex one) was undertaken by one of the delegations, selected in advance, presenting comments or raising questions on the topic.

Highly qualified Members of the House of Commons with special expertise in the various subject areas acted as chairmen and commentators of the discussions. They not only chaired the discussions but provided relevant information based on their own experience and commented upon the views expressed by delegates.

The major subjects considered are listed in the left hand column and the sections into which some of them were divided are shown on the right of the page, as follows:-

The status of Speakers in  
Parliament and the Legislatures

The role and duties of Members

- (1) Their relationship to the public service.
- (2) Their relationship to the front bencher and party caucus.
- (3) Their opportunities within the framework of parliamentary procedure.

Parliamentary procedure, its development  
and its significance today

Parliament at work

- (1) The role of the Chairman, the House Leaders and the Opposition.
- (2) Adequacy of the question period.
- (3) Control of expenditure and taxation.
- (4) Methods of obtaining redress of grievances and calling the government to account.

Parliament and its workload

- (1) What degree of latitude in debate is consistent to the efficient despatch of business.
- (2) How does Parliament safe-guard its prestige, creditibility and efficiency in the face of modern pressures.

Constitutional Evolution of the N.W.T.

Under the item "Constitutional development in the N.W.T." Commissioner Hodgson presented an outline of the significant steps taken in the development of government in the N.W.T. from 1870 to date. Following his presentation he dealt with a number of questions from delegates regarding government in the Territories.

In reporting to Council after the first Canadian Parliamentary Seminar I stated that it had been a most useful experience and was one which should, I felt, be repeated when the opportunity presented itself. In reviewing this second seminar my opinion that it is a useful experience which should be repeated whenever possible is reconfirmed.

Continuing participation in this type of activity is, in my opinion, of distinct benefit at this time and in the future to the Council of the Northwest Territories because: -

Parliamentary procedures is an evolving subject continually changing and Council would be provided with a means of examining, and where appropriate, adapting changes adopted by other legislatures.

The Speaker and Members of Council will be able on a rotating basis to acquire a more complete understanding of the systems, procedures and practices employed in legislatures.

The Speaker and Council Members would be provided with an opportunity to meet fellow Parliamentarians and discuss matters of mutual concern.

Air Marshal Campbell  
24 December 1974