

to study and discuss the procedures and practices of Parliament. Anyone who has tried to master the intricacies of procedure will appreciate how useful this can be for new members, though prospective Speakers, Whips and House Leaders have also attended. The seminars, given by senior British parliamentarians and parliamentary officials, also serve as forums for the discussion and comparison of procedural innovations adopted in various countries. In 1973, the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association organized a regional seminar on parliamentary practice and procedure bringing together delegates from both the federal and provincial legislatures. Meetings were organized on such items as the general rules of debate, the broadcasting of legislative proceedings, financial procedure, private members' business and the facilities and services available to members. A second such seminar was held in 1974, and similar activities in the future should increase the professional capabilities of legislators and indirectly add to the prestige of the parliamentary system itself.

*New group  
advises Speakers  
on activities*

A new development took place in 1975, when the Speakers of the House of Commons and the Senate brought together a group of parliamentarians to advise them on interparliamentary activities. This group consists of the chairmen of the various parliamentary associations and a few other senior parliamentarians nominated by the Speakers. This Inter-Parliamentary Council meets at the call of the Speakers.

#### **Lack of reporting**

Although Canadian legislators have attended meetings of parliamentary associations since 1900, the Standing Orders have never recognized the principle that delegations have a duty to report back to Parliament on their activities and deliberations. As early as 1927, Senator Napoléon Belcourt introduced a motion to call the attention of the Senate to resolutions adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union at its conference in Washington and Ottawa in 1925. But this was an isolated example, never duplicated in either House during the years Canada sent representatives to the Inter-Parliamentary Union from 1900 to 1939 or to the Empire Parliamentary Association from 1911 to 1947. The situation began to change in the late 1950s, when Canadian and American legislators created a Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group. In forming this association, Canadian delegates agreed to report to Parliament and to keep the Department of External Affairs informed

of the discussions and developments that took place. For several years, reports were printed in the debates of both the Senate and the House of Commons, but in 1966 Speaker Lucien Lamoureux decided that these did not constitute proper appendices, and the practice was discontinued in the Lower House. The Upper Chamber continued to print these regular reports, as well as those of three other parliamentary associations. There are problems, however, in leaving the matter of reporting entirely in the hands of the Senate. For example, to date Senators have not participated in the Canada-France Inter-Parliamentary Association. Furthermore, the Senate may not always be represented on delegations for other associations or there may be only one Senator in attendance and, if he does not feel like making a report or if he becomes ill or preoccupied with other matters, no report is made for an entire year. The whole question of reporting is left entirely to the initiative of individual Senators and the selection procedure does not always take into account the likelihood of a Senator's making a report.

In 1969, the Executive Committee of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, while acknowledging the usefulness of reports in the Senate, sought to find some way to allocate time in the House of Commons for debating matters relating to parliamentary associations. The matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, which rejected any change or amendment to the Standing Orders but agreed that debates should take place on activities and reports to allow Members to draw the attention of the Government to the resolutions, ideas and views put forward at such meetings. The Committee recommended that those Members who wished to discuss such matters should place a motion on the Order Paper under Private Members' Notices of Motion, and that, in such cases, the House Leaders should give priority to establishing an early date for debate. This procedure was first used in 1973, when a Private Member's motion was introduced to call the attention of Parliament to the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on European Co-operation and Security in Helsinki. The matter was subsequently referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, which held four meetings on the subject and called witnesses from the Department of External Affairs and universities in Toronto and Ottawa. This did not become a regular procedure, however, and some Members of Parliament have continued to