

The government is formed by the party or combination of parties gaining the largest number of seats in the 265-seat House of Commons. The leader of the majority party becomes Prime Minister and selects the members of his executive or Cabinet from among his supporters, who are normally Members of Parliament. Ministers, individually and collectively, are responsible to the electorate through the House of Commons. Each government department is headed by a Cabinet minister and is staffed by civil servants recruited and promoted by an independent Commission.

The Senate, or Upper House, provides, in the words of Sir John A. Macdonald, an opportunity for "sober

1) The House of Commons, Ottawa

2) The Senate, Ottawa

1



2

second thought" in legislation. It consists of 102 members appointed for life by the government. Representation is on a regional basis; each of the principal territorial divisions—the Western Provinces, Quebec, Ontario, and the three older Atlantic Provinces—send 24 members to the Senate; Newfoundland sends six. The Senate's chief function is the review of legislation passed by the elected House. It may also initiate legislation, except for money bills, and no measure can become law until passed by the Upper House as well as by the Commons.

Except for Quebec, which has an appointed Legislative Council, the provincial legislatures are made up of

single elected chambers which function in the same way as the House of Commons. Municipal government is administered by elected city, town or county councils headed by mayors or reeves.

Justice is administered by federal, provincial and municipal courts. Judges, except those in municipal courts, are federally appointed.

The Criminal Code of Canada is based largely on British law; the province of Quebec has retained its own civil code, a direct descendant of the *Coutume de Paris*. In other provinces the law respecting persons and property is based on the Common Law of England. The Supreme Court of Canada is the final court of appeal.