

Elections are held every four years, and the voting age is 18. There is a single political party, which is the Hungarian socialist workers' party, and it controls the National Assembly. The head of the party, the first secretary, is Janos Kadar.

● (1440)

The Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament is Mr. Antal Apro, my opposite number, and our official host. He is an intelligent, charming man, 60 years of age, a most gracious host with a delightful wife, who made the women of our group feel very welcome indeed. Mr. Apro's personal political history goes back to the age of 16. He was an anti-Fascist guerrilla fighter in World War II. Amongst other things, he is a devoted philatelist, and I am pleased to say he seemed to appreciate very much the Canadian first day of issue stamps we carried with us and presented to him.

Mr. Apro has the assistance of two deputies—a woman, Mrs. Gabor Varga, and a man, Miklos Beresztoczy—both elected members of the National Assembly. During our visit they were both very helpful to Mr. Apro and very kind to us. The thought certainly occurred to me that it might be an improvement in our chamber if there were deputy speakers, or even one deputy speaker, to assist the Speaker. Also, I think a church dignitary, whether assistant to the Speaker or not, would certainly add prestige to our chamber, as it does to the Hungarian Parliament.

During our visit we learned that in centuries past Hungary has been a remarkable country indeed. Her people were forced out of Asia in the 10th century and finally settled in the Danube Basin. For centuries after that the Kingdom of Hungary was one of the largest in Europe, second only to France.

In 1919, after World War I, Hungary's size was cut in half. It lost half its people and half its land, and, in addition, its access to the sea. It was, in short, beset upon by traditional enemies. Rumania invaded. Budapest was looted. There was the bloody dictatorship of Bela Kun. In the twenties and the thirties Hungary was drawn into the Axis sphere of influence, because the alternative seemed to be annihilation. Finally, Hungary became an extension of the Third Reich. As the Germans collapsed in World War II, the Russians conquered. At the end of the war, in 1945, the communists won 15 per cent of the free vote, and it was not long before they gained control.

In 1949 a constitution modelled in theory and convention after that of the Soviet Union was introduced. We were told that there has been a slow but steady liberalization of the Hungarian society since its internal convulsion was settled by the Soviet Union in 1956.

We were each presented with a copy of the consolidated text of the Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic, which was passed by Parliament in April 1972. The foreword states that this constitution embodies the fundamental changes that have taken place in the life of the country and the historical results of the struggle for social progress and the building of the country.

We found the Hungarian officials and citizens whom we met to be universally friendly. They were anxious for better trade relations with us, and they seemed eager to accomplish this. They are full of good humour, and they

delight in making their points with small appropriate jokes. I am reminded that they were also amused by us, as you will see by an incident which I will refer to later.

You will be interested in the composition of our group. From the Senate there was Senator and Mrs. Welch and myself. From the House of Commons there was Mr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Lefebvre of the Liberal Party, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald W. Baldwin of the Progressive Conservative Party, and Mr. and Mrs. William G. Knight of the New Democratic Party. We were accompanied by Mr. J. W. Dean, Director and Administrator of Personnel of the Senate, and Mr. A. Gilbert, Executive Assistant to the Speaker of the House of Commons, who looked after all arrangements for our Canadian group extremely well.

Hon. Mr. Martin: As a matter of record, I think honourable senators would want to have it noted that Your Honour was chairman of the delegation.

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: Thank you. Although we had an agenda, our delegation was not strictly bound to any particular subjects of discussion with our hosts. However, it was a serious hard-working group, interested and anxious to learn about the history, culture and economics of our host country, and we found our hosts more than willing to give us information about anything that interested us.

I have travelled considerably with various groups, and it seemed to me the members of our party were very compatible and got along unusually well with each other, perhaps because the group was small. I want to state—because there has been some question about this with other groups—that in my opinion the presence of the wives of the delegates did much to help to bring about the rapport that was established with our hosts.

By way of background to the story I propose to tell, I should explain—I have perhaps been helped in saying this by Senator Martin's interjection—although at our first meeting I spoke at some length, at subsequent meetings, after an address by the person on whom the group was calling, I usually made a few general remarks and then called on some member of the group, who had previously agreed to do so, to reply on behalf of the group, following which there was a general discussion by both sides.

Once, when I called upon Mr. Knight to do this, he began his remarks by saying frankly that it was the policy of his party, the New Democratic Party, to abolish the Senate. I was rather startled, but have thought since that perhaps nothing could have demonstrated more clearly to our hosts that the members of our group were free to speak for themselves. Subsequently, during the discussion, Senator Welch made an excellent contribution supporting the Senate, and I used that occasion to point out to our hosts that our group of parliamentarians did not represent the government, or speak for government policy on the subject of Senate reform, or indeed any other matter. I stated also that we were present as representatives of various parties and that we held individual opinions, as they could very well see, and a variety of views. I think there is no doubt that all this worked to the benefit of more understanding between our two countries.

If Hungarians do not share our ways completely, not just in the matter of not having a Senate of their own,