

Constitutional  
and Parliamentary  
Information

ASGP



**Parliamentary Buildings**  

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**Parliamentary needs of newly  
independent countries**

# **INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

## **Aims**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union whose international Statute is outlined in a Headquarters Agreement drawn up with the Swiss federal authorities, is the only world-wide organization of Parliaments.

The aim of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is to promote personal contacts between members of all Parliaments and to unite them in common action to secure and maintain the full participation of their respective States in the firm establishment and development of representative institutions and in the advancement of the work of international peace and co-operation, particularly by supporting the objectives of the United Nations.

In pursuance of this objective, the Union makes known its views on all international problems suitable for settlement by parliamentary action and puts forward suggestions for the development of parliamentary assemblies so as to improve the working of those institutions and increase their prestige.

## **Membership of the Union as of 12 November 1988**

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, France, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Federal Republic of), Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, USSR, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Associated member: European Parliament.

## **Structure**

The organs of the Union are:

1. *The Inter-Parliamentary Conference* which meets twice a year.
2. *The Inter-Parliamentary Council*, composed of two members from each affiliated Group.  
*President:* Mr. Daouda Sow (Senegal).
3. *The Executive Committee*, composed of twelve members elected by the Conference, as well as of the Council President acting as *ex officio* President. At present, it has the following composition:

*President:* Mr. B. Sow (Senegal)

*Members:* Mr. R. Bitat (Algeria); Mr. B. Friesen (Canada); Mr. Huan Xiang (China), Mr. S. Khunkitti (Thailand), Mr. J. Maciszewski (Poland), Mr. N.C. Makombe (Zimbabwe), Mrs. M. Molina Rubio (Guatemala), Mr. L.N. Tolkunov (USSR), Sir M. Marshall (United Kingdom), Mr. M.A. Martinez (Spain), Mr. I. Noergaard (Denmark), Mr. C. Nunez Tellez (Nicaragua), Mrs. L. Takla (Egypt).

4. *Secretariat of the Union*, which is the international secretariat of the Organization, the headquarters being located at: Place du Petit-Saconnex, CP 99, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.

*Secretary general:* Mr. Pierre Cornillon.

## **Official publication**

The Union's official organ is the *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin*, which appears quarterly in both English and French. This publication is indispensable in keeping posted on the activities of the Organization. Subscription can be placed with the Union's Secretariat in Geneva.

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# Constitutional and Parliamentary Information

Association of Secretaries General  
of Parliaments

*1st Series - No. 1601st half-year 1990*  
*First Series - Fortieth year*

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# Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

## Fifty Years

When Members of Parliament meet to debate politics, their parliamentary officials meet to discuss procedure and administration. Thus the twice-yearly conferences of the Inter-Parliamentary Union provide an opportunity for the top parliamentary officials from around the world to share experience and exchange information on the running of the parliamentary machine in different countries. Political systems differ from country to country, but the needs of a parliament, in terms of rules of procedure, staff and support services, libraries and official reports etc. can have many similarities. This is the role, within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments.

The Association first met in Oslo on 16 August 1939. The parliaments of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and the United States were represented. Fifty years later eighty-nine countries and five international parliamentary assemblies are represented in the Association. Since some of those countries have bicameral parliaments, a total of 116 chambers of parliament have members of the Association. Each chamber can send its top two officials, usually the Secretary-General or Clerk and his Deputy, to the Association's meetings. There are thus 170 active members of the Association and a further 40 honorary members (former members who have rendered the Association important services).

The aims of the Association are "to facilitate personal contacts between its members, to study the law of practice and procedure of parliament, and to propose measures for improving the working methods of different parliaments and for securing co-operation between the services of different parliaments" (Rule 1). "Each member of the Association shall furnish information on the law, practice, procedure and working methods and organisation of its parliament and the administration of the secretariat for an enquiry by the Association or at the request of any other member" (Rule 2).

Few members are able to attend every meeting and the pressures of parliamentary work at home prevents some from attending at all. When the Association meets for its week-long session during the twice-yearly Inter-Parliamentary Conference usually about a third of the members or their substitutes are present. Working to an agenda agreed in advance, the Association studies the parliamentary system in the host country, conducts topical discussion on specific subjects and examines comparative information on the practices in different parliaments.

The main visible product of the Association's work is the reports it produces. Since 1960 some 56 reports have been produced covering subjects such as methods of voting, parliamentary committees, privileges and immunities of Members of Parliament, procedure for passing legislation and financial interests of Members of Parliament. Producing such a report usually takes at least two years. The Secretary-General who initiates the subject is asked to draw up a questionnaire for reply by all parliaments. Once the questionnaires have been adopted by the Association and sent out to all members, the rapporteur compiles a report based on the replies to the questionnaire. The subject may not be relevant or topical in all parliaments, but generally replies are received from at least half of the countries who are represented in the Association. The rapporteur's draft report is then discussed in outline at one session of the Association and then in detail prior to adoption at the next session. A report is then published in the journal, *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information*. Not only do these reports comprise around the world comparative analysis of the practice in different parliaments on a particular matter; they also are based upon information supplied by the parliamentary officials who are the absolute experts in their field.

The process of compiling such a report is onerous both on the rapporteur and on the Secretaries-General who have to reply to the questionnaire. The Association has therefore devised a shorter way of looking at a chosen topic. At each session there are three or four topical discussions. The subject will have been proposed by a member at the previous session and he will have produced a three or four page- introductory note circulated in advance of the meeting. Each Secretary-General comes prepared to describe the practice in his parliament on the chosen subject. Among the subjects discussed recently are time limits on speeches and debates, methods of checking the attendance of Members of Parliament and whether committee meetings are held in public or behind closed doors. Sometimes the interest shown in a topical discussion is such that the Association decides to conduct a questionnaire and report on it. In any case the summary report of the topical discussion is

published in the Association's journal, *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information*. A list of the Association's reports appears at Annex 2.

These are the two main working methods of the Association but each session begins with a description by the host Secretary-General of the parliamentary system in his country. This is almost always followed by a visit to the parliamentary buildings and a question and answer session. With the Association meeting twice a year in different countries, this enables members to build up a detailed knowledge of the parliaments of particular countries. Within the space of two years the Association may visit a large and well established parliament such as that of Canada, a newly created parliament such as that of Nicaragua, a parliament re-established after a suspension of democracy such as that of Argentina and a long-standing parliament undergoing major reform such as that of Bulgaria.

What are the benefits of this work? For new parliaments or parliaments of newly-independent countries, the Association's meetings and papers provide access to the experience of many other countries in establishing and running parliamentary services. For well-established parliaments contemplating some procedural or administrative change, the Association's work helps to identify the merits and disadvantages of particular systems in other countries. Above all the Association is a meeting place of top parliamentary officials who can discuss informally their duties and problems and draw on each other's knowledge to assist them. Sometimes a Secretary-General with a particular problem sends round a mini-questionnaire containing three or four questions to obtain a picture of how the particular matter is dealt with in other parliaments. Alternatively he may telephone three or four of his opposite numbers who he has met at the Association's meetings to ask for their advice.

Like the Inter-Parliamentary Union the Association's meetings and documents are conducted only in French and English.

The Association's officers comprise a President, 2 Vice-Presidents and 6 members of the Executive Committee. They are now elected to serve for six sessions (normally three years). They cannot be re-elected to the same post at the end of their term of office. As with membership of the Association, membership of the Executive Committee is personal and reflects the contribution an individual makes to the work of the Association. The current President of the Association is Takis Hadjoannou, Permanent Secretary of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, and a list of his predecessors appears as Annex 1. The secretariat of the Association is provided part-time by officials in the French National Assembly and the UK House of Commons.

The Association's journal, *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information* has been published quarterly until 1989. It will now appear twice a year. It contains the Association's reports, summaries of topical discussions and other proceedings. It is also the means by which the constitutions of various countries are published throughout the world. When a country has introduced a new constitution or revised its old one it is the practice for the Secretary-General of its parliament to send the document for publication in *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information*. The journal is distributed to parliaments throughout the world and subscriptions are taken out by libraries and academics. As well as appearing in a larger volume twice a year, a new style has been adopted for the journal to appear for the first time in 1989.

**ANNEX 1**  
**Presidents of the Association of Secretaries-General  
of Parliaments**

1939	Mr Kesper (Netherlands)
1946-49	Sir Gilbert Champion (United Kingdom)
1949-56	Mr Emile Blamont (France)
1956-60	Sir Edward Fellowes (United Kingdom)
1960-65	Mr Schepel (Netherlands)
1965-68	Mr Rosetti (Israel)
1968-70	Dr Charles Zinn (USA)
1970-73	Mr Humblet (Belgium)
1973-76	Mr Shakhder (India)
1976-78	Mr Jean Lyon (France)
1978-81	Mr Helge Hjortdal (Denmark)
1981-83	Mr Netanel Lorch (Israel)
1983-86	Dr Walter Koops (Netherlands)
1986-87	Sir Kenneth Bradshaw (United Kingdom)
1987-89	Mr Charles Lussier (Canada)
1989	Mr Takis Hadjioannou (Cyprus)

**ANNEX 2**  
**Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments**  
**List of Reports of the Association**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Issues C &amp; PI (3rd Series)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Rapporteur</i>	<i>No. of countries replying to Questionnaire</i>
1950	No. 4	Organisation of a Service of Foreign Documents in a Parliamentary Assembly	Mr E. Blamont (France)	12
1950	No. 4	Methods of compelling Governments to answer Questions asked by Members of Parliament	Mr E. Fellowes (United Kingdom)	15
1951	No. 8	Methods of Voting	Mr M. O'Connell (Ireland)	13
1951	No. 8	Organisation and Administration of Parliament	Mr M. Rosetti and A. Zidon (Israel)	15
1951	No. 8	Payments to Members of Parliament	Mr A.-F. Schepel (Netherlands)	11
1951	No. 8	Parliamentary Immunity	Mr G. Tommasini (Italy)	14
1952	No. 12	Parliamentary Incapabilities	Mr F. Humblet (France)	20
1953	No. 16	Parliament and Respect for the Law	Mr E. Blamont (France)	14
1953	No. 16	Methods of expediting Parliamentary Business	Mr A.-P. Meigeville (France)	20
1954	No. 20	Control of the Constitutionality of Law	Mr G. Hoff (Norway)	20
1954	No. 20	Powers of the Chair in a Parliamentary Assembly	Mr E. Fellowes (United Kingdom)	22
1955	No. 21	Status of Parties in Parliament	Mr M. Rosetti (Israel)	17



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<i>Year</i>	<i>Issues C &amp;PI (3rd Series)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Rapporteur</i>	<i>No. of countries replying to Questionnaire</i>
1955	No. 24	Parliamentary Committees	Mr R. Pauwels (Belgium)	21
1957	No. 30	Delegated Legislation	Mr E. Olsen (Denmark)	20
1958	No. 33	Budgetary Systems in different countries	Shri. S.L. Shakhder (India)	22
1958	No. 36	Amendments	Mr D.W.S. Lidderdale (United Kingdom)	23
1958	No. 44	Extent of the Control of the Executive by different Parliaments	Sir E. Fellowes (United Kingdom)	23
1961	No. 48	The Arrangement of Parliamentary Business	Dr C. Zinn (U.S.A.)	24
1961	No. 48	Petitions	Mr A.-F. Schepel (Netherlands)	20
1963	No. 53	Interpellations	Dr A. Gwizdz (Poland)	22
1964	No. 57	Sources of Parliamentary Procedure	Mr M. Rosetti (Israel)	21
1964	No. 57	The Extent of Independence of Secretaries of Parliament from the Executive	Mr M. N. Kaul	24
1965	No. 64	Limitations on the Conduct and Activities of Members of Parliament	Mr P. O'Connell (Ireland)	20
1966	No. 68	Bicameral Parliaments	Mr F. Humblet (Belgium)	60
1967	No. 72	Offences against Parliament	Mr P. O'Connell (Ireland)	20
1967	No. 72	Procedure for Revising the Constitution	Mr F. Bezzi (Italy)	24

<i>Year</i>	<i>Issues C &amp;PI (3rd Series)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Rapporteur</i>	<i>No. of countries replying to Questionnaire</i>
1969	No. 77	Role of Parliament in Foreign Policy	Mr H. Trossman (Fed. Rep. Germany)	23
1969	No. 78	Staff Relations in Parliaments	Mr D.W.S. Lidderdale (United Kingdom)	30
1970	No. 84	Parliament and Public Corporations	Mr Zayat (United Arab Republic)	17
1971	No. 85	Preparation and Publication of Parliamentary Debates	Mr P. O'Connell (Ireland)	23
1972	No. 91	Parliamentary Contracts	Mr J.-L. Yuste Grijalba (Spain)	22
1972	No. 92	Publication of Codification of Laws	Mr R. W. Perceval (United Kingdom)	28
1973	No. 93	The System of Parliamentary Committees	Shri S.L. Shakhder (India)	26
1973	No. 95	The Organisation of Parliamentary Debates	Mr Jean Lyon (France)	24
1973	No. 96	The Organisation of the Staff of Parliaments	Mr S. Funaric (Yugoslavia)	27
1974	No. 97	Parliamentary Libraries	Mr P. O'Connell (Ireland)	28
1976	No. 105	The Private Member (inquiry not completed but adapted into essay by Rapporteur on role of Private Member in the British, French and US Congressional Systems of Government)	Sir David Stephens (United Kingdom)	
1977	No. 110	Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Members of Parliament	Mr A. A. Khan (Pakistan)	26
1978	No. 113	Parliament and the Audio-Visual Media	Mr N. Lorch (Israel)	<b>22</b>

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<i>Year</i>	<i>Issues C &amp;PI (3rd Series)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Rapporteur</i>	<i>No. of countries replying to Questionnaire</i>
1978	No. 114	Procedure for Constitutional Revision	Mr P. O'Connell (Ireland)	22
1978	No. 115	Interpellations, Questions and Analogous Procedures for the Control of Government Actions and Challenging the Responsibility of Government	Mr G. Bruyneel (Belgium)	22
1979	No. 118	The Right of Petition	Mr Ploos van Amstel (Netherlands)	19
1979	No. 119	The Budget of Parliaments	Mr J. Priou (France)	18
1980	No. 123	Relations between National Parliaments and International Parliamentary Assemblies	Mr John Priestman (Council of Europe)	35
1981	No. 130	Control of Constitutionality of Laws	Mr Rubio Llorente (Spain)	19
1982	No. 131	Procedure for Passing Legislation	Mr J. Grey (United Kingdom)	34
1982	No. 132	Methods of Voting	Mr K. Bradshaw (United Kingdom)	29
1984	No. 142	Methods of deciding the emoluments of Members of Parliament	Miss Courtot (U.S.A.)	40
1984	No. 141	Research and reference services of Parliament	Mr Borgniet (France)	41
1984	No. 139-140	System of parliamentary committees	Mr Schellknecht (Fed. Rep. Germany)	43
1985	No. 144	Role of the Secretary General of Parliament	Mr de Guzman (Phillippines)	50

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<i>Year</i>	<i>Issues C &amp;PI (3rd Series)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Rapporteur</i>	<i>No. of countries replying to Questionnaire</i>
1985	No. 145	Parliament and the treaty-making power	Mr Ploos van Amstel (Netherlands)	23
1986	No. 150	Bilateral relations between Parliaments	Mr Jonovski (Yugoslavia)	33
1986	No. 148	Financial interests of Members of Parliament	Mr Boulton (United Kingdom)	45
1987	No. 152	Women in the administration of parliaments	Mrs do Carmo Romao (Portugal)	43
1987	No. 154	Registration of Lobbyists	Mrs Lever (Canada)	34
1988	No. 157	Methods of election of Speaker	Mr Charpin (France)	57
1989	No. 158	Obstruction of parliamentary proceedings	Dr Buecker (Fed. Rep. Germany)	38

## Televising of Parliament

### I. Introductory note by Mr. Nys, Secretary General of the Belgian Senate

Broadcasting parliamentary debates raises both points of principle and technical questions. The decision in principle to allow televised filming of parliamentary debates is linked to the development in habits and the growing importance that this medium plays in society.

From a technical point of view the main problems arise from the historic character of parliamentary buildings and, in particular, the Chamber or hemicycle in which positioning cameras and spot lights can deprive the surroundings of their proper style.

A decision to authorise the television broadcast of debates reflects the general attitude of Parliament towards the media. The period when it was considered inappropriate for legislative Chambers to publicise their proceedings has undoubtedly been overtaken in many countries. The attitude of parliaments towards television has developed in parallel with the increasing role it plays in modern, political and economic life.

In Belgium the introduction of television in Parliament in both Chambers has evolved in a similar way although the precise arrangements differ between the Chambers.

When consulted about the possibility of broadcasting proceedings live, the national television channels thought that the programmes ran the risk of being too boring. The occasions which were really interesting for television were fairly rare and lost in the middle of long debates much of which were uninteresting for the viewer.

It was therefore thought better to stick to short broadcasts eventually edited in a special way which would illustrate parliamentary life by image and sound better than an ordinary continuous broadcast. This option ensured a positive approach to parliamentary work without excluding criticism. Certain rules obviously had to be respected: it is essential that we take care, for example, not to concentrate on violent incidents, letting the camera rest on empty seats, drawing attention to the private lives of Members of Parliament but, still, endeavour to record important pictures.

In the Chamber of Representatives a working group has been set up to study ways of making Parliament better known through the means of the work of elected Members. This Group comprises the President, two rapporteurs (who are Members of the Chamber) and three other deputies. One possibility is to broadcast regular parliamentary programmes similar to the one called Den Haag Vandaag in the Netherlands.

In the Senate, equally, the Questeurs have undertaken the task of altering the layout of the hemicycle in order to improve the televising of proceedings. Discussions have taken place on technical matters with the national television channels RTBF and BRT. Bringing the spotlights (which are stronger than the lanterns installed in 1959) raises problems for maintaining the historic and aesthetic character of the Chamber.

At present differences continue to exist between the attitudes of the tv/o Chambers about the televising of debates. These reflect different attitudes towards publicity given to the work of Committees. If all plenary sittings are normally in public in both the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives the same does not apply to meetings of Committees which take place behind closed doors in the Senate but which are sometimes held in public in the Chamber. The result is that the Chamber permits the broadcasting of some Committee meetings but this is not the case in the Senate (though some pictures of the start of meetings are allowed and a Committee can always arrange a press conference after its meeting).

Up to now the arrangements have been made under an agreement between the Chamber and the Senate on technical arrangements favourable to the television channels: a cable enabling the direct broadcast of proceedings has been installed and editing rooms have been arranged for several television channels.

The growing place which television plays in the media inevitably encourages the greatest demand for the broadcast of parliamentary debates. Such televising will in future be an essential element of the information the public gets about the activities of the elected representatives of the nation.

Seen from this angle the televised broadcasting debates bringing the citizen closer to the elected Member and putting him in closer contact with national political events will contribute without doubt in the years to come to the understanding, at present fairly rudimentary, which the voter has of the mechanics of democracy in this country. But the televising of parliamentary debates will only play this positive role insofar as it remains within the domain of objective information which is its prime role.

## **2. Topical discussion**

### **Extracts from the minutes of the London meeting in September 1989**

Mr. NYS (Belgium) said that the greater role played by television in the coverage of political life had led to national parliaments allowing the sound and television recording of parliamentary debates and their broadcast. Thus over the last forty years television equipment had been progressively introduced into parliaments.

In Belgium the arrival of television in 1950 had led to the broadcast of certain special parliamentary occasions, such as the opening of the session, government statements and major topical debates when the pictures alone but not the sound were broadcast. At that time the President of each Chamber had discretion to authorise television. It then became necessary to make technical arrangements to enable cameras and sound equipment to be installed in the Parliamentary Chambers. Thus in 1959 steps were taken to improve the lighting in the Senate Chamber, subject to the limitations imposed by the historical nature of the building.

The system for allowing access to the television cameras had also changed over the years. It was not until the beginning of 1980 that the House of Representatives and the Senate gave the accredited television channels access to the parliamentary buildings on all occasions (previously advance permission was required for non-accredited channels).

One of the main problems currently was direct (live) broadcasting. Live broadcasting occurred rarely and only when public interest in a particular issue was very great. Generally broadcasting was confined to an edited report of parliamentary activities but a working group had been set up in the House of Representatives to study the possibility of a periodical live transmission similar to that in the Netherlands.

The Senate and the House of Representatives had different arrangements for the broadcast of parliamentary debates. The House allowed the broadcasting of Committee proceedings but the Senate did not (though the latter held press conferences after their meetings).

Mr. NYS concluded by saying that while television brought the citizen and the elected representative closer together by modern means of communication, the television channels had to act objectively in informing the voters.

The PRESIDENT asked what were the grounds for allowing or refusing the television cameras access to plenary proceedings.

Mr. NYS said it was necessary for the individual television channels to be accredited with the press office. Those that were accredited had complete access, whereas those that did not have to receive the permission in advance from the President of the Assembly. The President was not involved in accreditation.

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*"Television channels... sometimes did not wish to broadcast debates to which Members of Parliament attached importance."*

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Mr. ILUNGA (Zaire) referred to the conflict between the will of parliament which, sometimes, did not want particular debates televised and the wishes of the television channels, which sometimes did not wish to broadcast debates to which Members of Parliament attached importance. This is particularly acute when television was controlled by the Government.

Mr. NYS said the Government played no part in the televising of parliamentary proceedings in Belgium. The television channels which were accredited did not have to receive any permission from the President for access to the facilities but only had to give advanced warning that they would be using them.

Mr. ILUNGA asked what happens when broadcast was cut short.

Mr. NYS said that for technical reasons debates were not necessarily broadcast live but to his knowledge the Government had never wished to censure proceedings in parliament and so no problem had arisen in this area. The main problem was that television channels did not wish to bore their audiences.

Mr. BAKINAHE (Rwanda) asked for details of the arrangements for giving permission to television channels which were not accredited, and in particular whether they had simply to give notice or whether they had to satisfy certain criteria.

Mr. NYS said there was no simple rule although an advisory committee had been set up in 1977 but had not yet produced a report. This Committee monitored the broadcasts on Parliament and notified the President and the Bureau of the impartiality of the press and the balance of opinions expressed. Actually this Committee had met only once. Although its members wanted a



balance between sound and visual broadcasting they did not wish to set down precise criteria.

On the other hand it was assumed that the media organisations would follow unwritten rules about not covering violent or dramatic incidents or showing empty seats or the private lives of elected Members. On the other hand they could cover all the significant aspects of parliamentary work. There had never been a dispute between the Chambers and the television companies, which showed that there was a *modus vivendi* to avoid coverage of regrettable incidents. A balance could be achieved either by arranging press conferences parliamentary work or the creation, as in the Netherlands, of a daily summary of parliamentary proceedings.

Mr. MARLEAU (Canada) asked about the coverage of debates. The House of Commons in Canada, as well as certain provincial Legislatures (Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan), had opted for absolute control of parliamentary debates. These were recorded by the Assembly itself and passed to the broadcasting authorities for transmission.

Mr. NDIAYE (Senegal) said that generally when one political group decided that television broadcast of debates gave too much attention to the majority party, the Opposition took steps to get a greater share for themselves.

Mr. NYS said that there had never been a problem between the Opposition and the Majority in Belgium and that in parliamentary debates, since it was the Opposition that spoke first, they had a major role to play. They were then followed by the largest group within the Majority Coalition.

Mr. WHEELER-BOOTH (United Kingdom) said that the television experiment in the House of Lords had been influenced by a wish to give the Lords similar attention to that enjoyed by the House of Commons. Although the House of Lords had voted in favour of an experiment in 1966 this did not take place then because the House of Commons had voted against at that time. In 1985 the subject was taken up again and a Committee was appointed. The following year full-scale television recording of the House of Lords debates was agreed to but the main problem was financial.

The two major broadcasting organisations (BBC and ITV) had contributed to the costs and were given access to the technical facilities they required. To begin with, the two organisations took turns but currently only the ITV undertook television coverage of proceedings. From a technical point of view three cameras had been installed, one at floor level and two in the Gallery. The lighting had to be re-organised in a way that did not alter the general appearance of the Chamber.

Editorial control over broadcasting was left to the television channels which, nonetheless, had to follow certain rules laid down by a committee: principally the obligation to provide an accurate and politically impartial report. There was no control on the length of coverage. One restriction prevented the use of parliamentary debates in satirical or comedy programmes. Each day television coverage of the House of Lords broadcast both the plenary sittings and certain committees (both the Judicial Committee and committees of inquiry). On the other hand Ministerial statements could not be broadcast (because these were simultaneously given with similar statements in the then untelevised House of Commons). Inevitably broadcast programmes showed only a few of the speeches made in a debate. In general there were two programmes on BBC and ITV, the one daily and the other weekly. Viewing figures indicated 14,000 people watched such programmes and general opinion was that coverage was well-balanced.

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*"There had been little effect on the proceedings in the House."*

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The primary purpose of the experiment had been achieved in that the public had been interested in the work of the House of Lords. There had been little effect on the proceedings in the House after the first days of the experiment but there had been an increase in lobbying of the House of Lords. As a result of the positive reaction of the Lords, the House of Commons had now decided to conduct a similar experiment.

Dr. SARDI (Hungary) asked who was responsible for the financing of the televising of proceedings. Mr. NYS said that in Belgium the equipment and installation costs were provided by the Assembly. Returning to Mr. NDIAYE's point about minor or opposition parties, he said that criticisms could arise not so much from coverage of parliamentary proceedings as from political broadcasts which might be criticised by groups not represented in parliament.

Mr. WAN ZAHIR said that in Malaysia, which could be considered as a developing country, only two debates had been televised, namely the Opening of Parliament by the King and the debate on the Government budget proposals. There was not great enthusiasm from the broadcasting of debates given the technical and financial problems involved. Members did not wish for full coverage but were prepared for summaries of debates to be published.

Some favoured greater coverage but this might not take place for four or five years.

Mr. MAHRAN (Egypt) submitted a paper as follows:

In accordance with the provision of Article (259) of the People's Assembly "Rules of Procedure", the Assembly sittings are public, which means that the public can follow-up the Assembly discussions either by direct attendance of the Assembly sittings or by reading the Assembly records and what the specialized parliamentary press published on those discussions while following the Assembly discussions and its various activities.

Attendance at Assembly sitting is a matter governed by the rules of the Assembly, which determine the number of those who attend—from outside—the sittings in a matter that is compatible with the requirements of parliamentary work.

Due to the great importance of mass media, particularly television, to public opinion, and since the parliament is the elected body of the nation, the People's Assembly in Egypt attaches great importance to TV broadcasting of its sittings so as to give a full idea of the Assembly's work and interests.

There are certain rules that should be observed in broadcasting the sittings on TV. The first rule is allocating reasonable time to broadcasting to allow a clear and overall review of the discussions taking place. The second rule is that the time allocated should not be so long as to cause boredom and annoyance to the audiences. The third rule is: TV broadcasting coverage of the discussions must reflect the time devoted to different points of view, particularly those expressed by the opposition.

It is certain that TV broadcasting of the sittings causes technical and administrative problems which require permanent and overall coordination between the officials in the Assembly General Secretariat, particularly the technical body, and TV technical team which follow up the work in the Assembly.

In addition, getting modern TV equipment into the Assembly raises again the question of making a balance between maintaining the building as a historical and architectural monument and the modern needs and necessities.

Moreover, besides TV broadcasting of the Assembly discussions, it presents every now and then a brief review of the activities of the Assembly's standing (specific) committees in the event of their dealing with a subject that interests public opinion or the hearings held by the Assembly on one of the significant subjects such as youth, housing, narcotics, etc.

Within the framework of permanent co-ordination between the People's Assembly and TV officials, both parties are keen on making the TV a channel between the parliament members and their voters through inviting the former to participate in different TV opinion programmes that discuss issues that interest public opinion.

The first channel of the Egyptian television regularly broadcasts the People's Assembly discussions, the second and third channels co-operate with the first channel to give a clear picture of the Assembly's work and activities in the aforementioned manner.

## Parliamentary buildings

### 1. Introductory note by Mr. Harry Evans, Clerk of the Australian Senate

No doubt an Australian has been invited to introduce discussion on this topic because of the construction of the new Parliament House at Canberra, which was occupied in July 1988.

The Australian advice to parliaments about to construct a new parliamentary building is: don't!

The task of moving a parliament and all its support services and structures to a completely new building is extremely onerous. It also provides an opportunity to appreciate, perhaps for the first time, the very complex and subtle relationship between a legislative assembly and the building in which it meets.

The activities of a legislature are essentially intellectual and not necessarily related to the physical environment. The processes of deliberation, inquiry and resolution do not require any particular physical location. A parliament could meet in the open air, like the assembly of the ancient Athenians. There is no doubt, however, that the physical environment of a building may have profound and often unintended effects on the operations of a legislature.

The following provides some observations on parliamentary buildings, drawn from the experience of the removal of the Australian Houses to their new quarters.

It appears to us highly desirable that the parliamentary building be given a special and defined legal status appropriate to its role as the home of the legislative assembly. In Canberra the legal status of the old Parliament House had not been defined; technically it was simply another property of the state and could be disposed of by the executive government. It was clear that this situation should not continue in relation to the new building. The Parliament therefore passed the Parliamentary Precincts Act 1988, before moving to the new building. This statute defines the parliamentary precincts (the building itself and a surrounding area), and provides that the precincts are under the management and control of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on behalf of the two Houses, subject to the

direction of the Houses. The Act also makes provision in relation to the powers of police and security personnel and the prosecution of offences in the precincts. Some such provisions, it seems to us, are necessary to ensure that the Houses of the Parliament have the ability to control their own working environment.

It is also necessary in practice to ensure that those who undertake the actual tasks of managing the building, the personnel who run the physical operations of the building, are responsible, through the Presiding Officers, to the Houses, and in carrying out their work are responsive to the requirements of the Houses.

This has been something of a problem in Canberra. The people concerned tend to be technicians without a very sound appreciation of the peculiar requirements and sensitivities of the Houses. They tend also to have a background of working for executive government departments or private organisations and bring with them work methods and attitudes appropriate to those environments. To give examples of a minor sort, staff who carry out repairs and maintenance seem to have difficulty in performing these tasks according to the exigencies of meetings of the Houses and committees, and air-conditioning engineers do not seem to have yet mastered the techniques of maintaining a constant temperature in a large parliamentary chamber which is full of people at some times and largely empty at other times. Managers of these sorts of services also often have difficulty in adjusting their nostrums of efficient management to the parliamentary processes, which seem to them inefficient and untidy.

Another major difficulty is the conflict between the parliamentary buildings as an historical monument or as a piece of fine architecture and its function as the workplace of a working institution. Many parliaments meet in buildings which are of great historical significance or of great architectural significance. There is a natural tendency for uses and alterations of the building to be governed by the constraints of preserving its historic form and of conforming with its architectural concepts and design, and for the efficient use of the space by a working institution to take a subordinate place.

This was a constant source of trouble during the construction of the new Parliament House in Canberra. The members and officers of the Houses wanted to be sure that the building would efficiently accommodate the practical parliamentary functions, while the architects and the construction personnel were constantly striving to preserve the integrity of the design and the architectural magnificence of the monument. Now that the Houses are in possession of the building they can make it work as they wish, as any

building may be made to work, but members and officers of the Houses are still frequently heard to complain that working efficiency has been subordinated to supposed beauty of design. The compromise between those two goals should always err on the side of the function of the building as the home of a working institution.

Similar complaints are sometimes heard from the parliaments of the Australian states, some of which meet in magnificently monumental buildings created in the middle of the last century when elected parliaments with full legislative powers were first established. The preservation of the historical aspects of the buildings often takes precedence over the necessary modifications of the buildings to accommodate the operations of modern legislatures.

There is a danger in parliaments meeting in buildings which are treasured for their historical or architectural value. The building may come to be valued more than the institution, or the institution may come to be seen as mainly historical or decorative. Historical traditions and fine buildings are all very well, but the value of parliaments lies in their practical functions as representative decision-making bodies and forums of free debate.

It would be interesting to know how other legislatures have dealt with these questions. Is the executive government entrusted with the formal legal control over the parliamentary building, or is it thought to be necessary for the legislature to control its own environment? Do the managers of the physical environment need to be firmly under the control of the elected legislatures or can they be left, as experts, to get on with their technical jobs? How is the intrinsic value of the building in historical or architectural terms ultimately reconciled with its function as a working environment?

## 2. Topical discussion

### **Extracts from the minutes of the London meeting in September 1989**

The PRESIDENT explained that Mr. EVANS (Australia) had circulated an introductory note on this subject but had been unable to attend the session. Mr. ANDERSON (USA) had agreed to introduce the discussion.

Mr. ANDERSON said that parliamentary buildings were the subject of constant concern. Adapting the practical needs of a parliament to its historical buildings was a difficult task. The US Congress had been in the same buildings for two centuries, apart from an interval between 1814 and 1819 when they had had to re-locate following a fire (on the circumstances of which he did not wish to elaborate in the presence of his British hosts).

An 18th to 19th century Capitol building was now being used for the parliamentary needs of a late 20th century country. There was a need to preserve the pristine state of a very public building which was the symbol of great historical events in the nation's past. The growing needs of Congress were now dealt with by building new offices nearby. But there was a danger of subordinating the institution to its architecture and of forgetting that institutions comprise people not buildings.

Other needs put great pressure on parliamentary buildings. Security was a problem as even greater numbers of visitors came to the Capitol each year. The needs of handicapped people had to be taken into account in a building which had inadequate lifts. New technology had to be incorporated into historic surroundings. There were conflicting needs for space between elected members and staff.

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*"An 18th to 19th century Capitol building was now being used for the parliamentary needs of a late 20th century country"*

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There was a curious division of responsibility for maintenance. The Architect of the Capitol, who was appointed by the President, had 2,000 staff around 12 buildings in 257 acres of grounds. The general principle was that if it moved the Clerk provided it, e.g. furniture, carpet, fittings. If not, the Architect was responsible, e.g. for painting, lights etc. This required close co-ordination between the Clerk and the Architect. Despite these day to day problems the role of the legislative buildings as a symbol of a country's system of democratic government and a source of inspiration could not be forgotten.

Mr. SWEETMAN (UK) said there was no question of the UK Parliament undertaking anything like a completely new building such as happened recently in Australia. There had been some speculation 15 or 20 years ago of moving Parliament away from London to a new site. This was no longer regarded as a serious possibility.

Current discussion focused on the re-development of buildings near to the Palace of Westminster, which was foremost a Palace and not a Parliament. Since the 1960s the need for expansion to meet the reasonable demands of Members had been recognised and several schemes had been proposed to develop the site opposite Big Ben. Public expenditure constraints had



prevented such development until in 1983 the Houses of Commons agreed to develop the Bridge Street site in two phases.

The first phase, which was due to be completed by 1990, would provide some space for Members, for the Library and residences for officials. These latter two would free more space for Members in the main building. This project was already behind schedule by a year or so. Phase 2 development might take a long time though an architect had been selected to work within the existing façade and at one point to construct a new façade compatible with the surrounding buildings. The whole of the development was to be treated as a single building and the issue of whether there would be a secure subway to the main part of the Palace had yet to be resolved.

The architect's guiding principles required the continuity of atmosphere with the Palace of Westminster and a parliamentary feel to the new building. Even with the Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments more than half the Members would not have their own office. An original target that by 1995 everyone who wanted an office to himself should have one was not recognised as achievable. The new building project had proceeded slowly and painfully because of a lack of political will and finance to achieve it. There had been some poor project management and changing demands in a very complex task. There was relatively little sustained interest among MPs in this project.

Mr. VLACHOS (Greece) said that the Greek Parliament met in a former Royal Palace which had been damaged by fire at the beginning of the century. All the buildings belonged to the State but renovation had to be paid for by parliament. He agreed with the point in the introductory note that a parliament could meet in the open air as had done the assembly of the ancient Athenians.

Mr. LAUNDY (Canada) said that one of the issues raised by the development of new parliamentary buildings was whether parliamentary privilege extended to outbuildings. The Canadian House of Commons had generally spread out from the main building as increases in staff on committee work required more office accommodation. An MP had been arrested in the grounds of the Parliament for non-payment of a parking ticket but the Privileges Committee had eventually decided that the Police had not exceeded their authority and breached parliamentary privilege. Another issue which had arisen in Canada was whether the Provincial Assembly of the North West Territories should be peripatetic; this would give rise to considerable problems.

Mr. WAN ZAHIR (Malaysia) said that his country's parliament had a much smaller building than those of Australia, the UK and the USA but they had moved into a new building in 1963. A compromise had been achieved between architecture and the working needs of Members. With the benefit of hindsight he felt more attention could have been given to the practical functions of parliament. The 17 storey tower block had been constructed for the use of MPs and Ministers but was not much used by MPs. Somehow a tower block seemed impractical for parliament. The Government was responsible for the building but the day to day maintenance was borne on the parliamentary budget.

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*"A compromise had been achieved between architecture and the working needs of Members."*

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Mr. HADJIOANNOU (Cyprus) said he was disappointed by Mr. Evans' advice not to construct a new building. Cypriot MPs were keen to have a new building because there was no room for them and their staff in the current building. The Government had agreed to the necessary expenditure but had not taken the other essential decisions. He would be grateful for advice, plans or photographs of new parliamentary buildings.

The PRESIDENT suggested that more blue prints might be available than photographs.

Mr. ALBA NAVARRO (Spain) said that the increase in parliamentary activity in Spain since 1977 had required a new building to be added to the original one in 1980 and a nearby building had been taken over for parliamentary groups. The buildings were owned by the State but the maintenance was borne on the parliamentary budget. Parliamentary buildings were often in the historical centre of cities where local planning rules had to be complied with. This was the constraint on new buildings. There had been a press campaign in Spain against an alleged breach of local planning rules by the new parliamentary building.

Mr. KAITOUNI (Morocco) said there was a tendency for the parliamentary organisations and the staff to have to adapt to the surroundings in which they worked. The Moroccan Parliament was under restrictions at adapting either the exterior or interior of the building, which was an historic monument: Members of Parliament who tended to come and go had to be accommodated in conjunction with staff whose link with the institution was more permanent.

Mr. CHARPIN (France) said he was grateful to Mr. Anderson for putting right French misconceptions about the luxury of the US Capitol. There had been an attempt to move the French Parliament to Versailles in 1870 but it did not last long. The two Chambers now met in separate buildings. In the 1960s there had been a plan to create a new building with both Chambers together and common services but that had been rejected by both the Deputies and the Senators. The historic buildings in which both met made it difficult to accommodate increases in staff and so adjacent buildings had been acquired and there had been considerable development underground. The tradition of parliament being open to citizens conflicted with modern security requirements. Although the two French Chambers were not the owners of the buildings in which they met, their precincts were clearly defined in a special law.

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*"The tradition of parliament being open to citizens conflicted with modern security requirements."*

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Mr. SAUVANT (Switzerland) said that Swiss MPs were seeking new facilities and the modern requirements of staff, information technology and the press all required more space. At present the press had the best place and were resisting any re-allocation of offices. He wondered what special rights the press had in other parliaments.

Mr. MARLEAU (Canada) said that institutions comprised people and parliaments were not museums. The Public Works Department owned the buildings in Canada but the national capital authority was the planning body. These matters could not be left either to MPs or to experts. There was general reluctance to concede control to a single officer but precise lines of authority were not clear. The Speaker had not been able to persuade civil servants to clean the Ottawa Peace Tower because, apparently, the structure would not survive the cleaning process.

Mr. ANDERSON said in conclusion that there had been great controversy in Washington about whether to refurbish or extend the west front of the Capitol. In the end it had been refurbished. No extra space had been created and the cost was nearly as much as building an extension. One of the strongest urges among elected politicians was for more space.

Mr. MAHRAN (Egypt) submitted a note as follows:

As part of the talk about the question of parliament buildings, I wish to put before you some remarks that reflect the experience of the People's Assembly in this respect.

A quick look should be first given to the People's Assembly building, considered as one of the major historic features closely linked with Egypt's parliamentary experience and democratic struggle. The building was originally designated as the parliament's headquarters in 1923 and officially inaugurated on March 15, 1924.

The building is of a characteristic technical style combining both European architectural arts in the late 19th century and early 20th century and Islamic influences.

The architectural design of the Assembly building is composed of a main circular hall with a capacity for 600 members with balconies next to it for distinguished visitors and the press.

The hall is surrounded by a circular passage with several wings including the Pharaonic gallery and the lounges of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Ministers together with another known (prior to the July Revolution) as the "Queen's Lounge".

The building includes as well the Speaker's Office with its Secretariat, offices for the Deputy Speakers, the Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General. It also includes a museum displaying the history of the parliamentary life in Egypt, as well as a set of relevant documents and manuscripts.

Nearby, there is a 10-storey additional building comprising conference rooms, and bureaux for the President of the Republic and concerned Ministers of People's Assembly and Shoura Affairs.

The building, furthermore, includes the Assembly library, and a number of auditoriums and rooms for standing (specific) committee meetings and the Opposition, plus the Secretariat offices of the said committees.

It finally contains services such as the clinic, the restaurant, and the Assembly members lounge.

No doubt, the first of all challenges that faced the Management Department in the Assembly was the necessity of preserving the historical structural value of the Assembly building alongside the requirements for running the activities of the parliamentary work on technical and technological basis.

To achieve this end, the Prime Minister made a decision in 1986 to deem the building an historic monument and entrusted the Monuments Authority with undertaking regular maintenance work on the Assembly building.

Moreover, the new building, as an extension of the Assembly building, was meant to observe historic considerations as regards the preservation of the original building as a historic monument.

In order to ensure the sound functioning of the Assembly building, corresponding to its role as a parliamentary institution, and to have it coupled with technological advance to up-grade the efficiency of the Assembly organs, the responsible official technical body has been affiliated to the General Secretariat. This operates the technical equipment for the Assembly such as lights, recording and air-conditioning etc.

The General Secretariat takes good care that this technical body includes the most highly qualified staff and provides proper training for them compatible with the kind of job they undertake, especially in handling surprise situations that might face the parliamentary action and require rapid reactions.

One of the pressing problems facing of the People's Assembly Building at present is the enlargement of the General Secretariat to cope with increasing requirements of the parliament. This demands extending the buildings annexed to the Main Building of the Assembly. An example is the expansion taking place in the library to make it a specialised information centre with all the up-to-date technical and location storage it needs.

Officials in the People's Assembly are concerned to learn of the experience of other parliaments on this subject, and especially technical know-how, vis-à-vis the management, maintenance and increased efficiency of the Parliament Building.