

Parliamentary Traditions

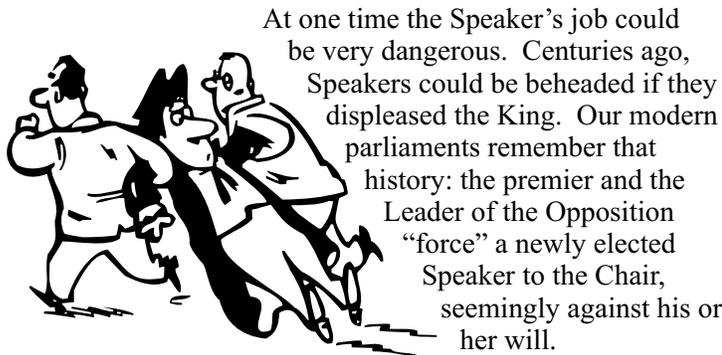


Speakers used to be appointed by the monarch. Over time the monarch's power was turned over to Parliament, so the Speaker's loyalty shifted from the monarch to the Parliament. When King Charles I barged into the Chamber in 1642 demanding the arrest of members opposed to his policies, the Speaker refused. By the end of the 17th century the Speaker was chosen by the Parliament.



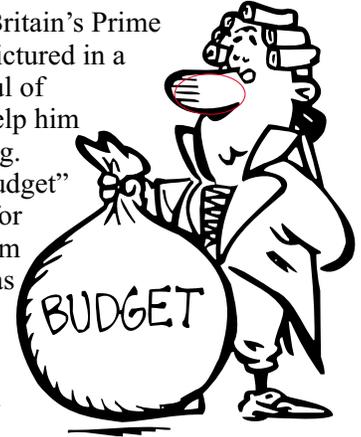
The ceremonial Speaker's procession, which opens every sitting of the Assembly, includes the Speaker and key parliamentary staff in their traditional black robes.

In 1733 Sir Robert Walpole, Britain's Prime Minister and Treasurer, was pictured in a political cartoon with a bagful of medicines and charms to help him plan government spending.



At one time the Speaker's job could be very dangerous. Centuries ago, Speakers could be beheaded if they displeased the King. Our modern parliaments remember that history: the premier and the Leader of the Opposition "force" a newly elected Speaker to the Chair, seemingly against his or her will.

The bag was called a "budget" after the French word for bag, "bouge," and from then on "budget" was used to refer to the government's revenue and expense plan for the year.



Parliamentary Trivia

Did you know the use of certain words has been banned in the Legislative Assembly? For example, "liar," "trained seal," or "jerk"?

Did you know that in England nine Speakers were executed because they reported to the monarch the wishes of Parliament?

Did you know that every word spoken in Alberta's Legislative Assembly is published in the official record called *Hansard*?

Did you know that the term "Reading," as in the "First Reading," goes back to the early days of Parliament in England, when few of the members could read or write and the Clerk had to read every bill aloud?

Did you know that Alberta's Legislature was the first Parliament in the Commonwealth to allow television cameras in its Chamber, in 1972?

Did you know that the term "cabinet" goes back to the times when a King would receive the advisers who helped govern his kingdom in a little secret office called a cabinet?

Did you know that guests were not always welcome in parliamentary chambers? For centuries the Parliament of England met in secret so members could speak freely without fear of reprisal.

Did you know that question period as we have it today wasn't firmly established until 1832?

Did you know that the distance between the government side and the opposition side in the Legislative Chamber is two and a half sword lengths?

Did you know that in Alberta in 1937 His Honour the Honourable John Bowen was the first Lieutenant Governor in Canada to refuse Royal Assent to a bill?

