

Feedback Report
On
Parliamentary Administration:
Benchmarking against UK Parliament

From
31st October to 11th November, 2011

At
The Royal Institute of Parliamentary Administration (RIPA), London

By
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INTRODUCTION

It is really a matter of privilege for me to be nominated to the Training Programme on "Parliamentary Administration: Benchmarking against UK Parliament" of two weeks' duration i.e. from 31st October to 11th November, 2011 at Royal Institute of Public Administration (RIPA) International, Fetter Lane, London, United Kingdom alongwith five other officers from various Services of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi by the Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, Hon'ble Dr. V. K. Agnihotri.

The group of Officers led by Smt. Nupur Goswami, Joint Director (I) left for London, U.K. on 30th October, 2011 by Air India Flight no. AI-115 at around 7.25 AM from New Delhi and landed at Heathrow Airport, London at about 11.30 PM (Local Time).

The High Commission of India arranged for cab to take the group to Strand Palace Hotel, Covent Garden, London where we were to stay during the Training Programme.

On Monday, the 31st October, 2011 the Training Programme was inaugurated by Mr. Ian Church, Director of Studies, RIPA International at 9.30 AM and Ms. Rachel Tame, Training co-ordinator was also present on the occasion. This was followed by a brief introduction session wherein each officer introduced himself/herself briefly mentioning about his/her official duties. There were total ten participants in this training programme comprising six of us and two participants namely Michael Henry Plaatjesand and Reighneth Makhosi Dlamini from South Africa, one named John Azumah from Nigeria and one participant named Graciano Anildo Da Cruz from Timor Leste. After this, Mr. Ian Church welcomed the participants in his opening address and provided essential information about the existing facilities and amenities. He also briefed about the course contents as well as the profiles of eminent faculty members.

Distinguished and experienced persons working in different fields, departments, services of the Westminster Parliament delivered lectures on the subjects concerning the British Constitution, Administrative structure of the Westminster Parliament, Reporting the Proceeding, Parliament and Politics in turmoil, Information Services in the House of Commons, the Select Committee system in the House of Commons, Parliament, politicians and the media etc. Besides Mr. Ian Church, Director of Studies and ex-Editor of the official reports in the House of Commons with Journalistic background, Robert Ingram, Prof. Gavin Drewry, Nick Beech, Tim Williams and Simon Burton were some of the other speakers in this training programme.

The contents of the course were found to be very valuable & befitting and a good endeavour was made in selecting the topics to cater to the needs of all the nominated officers of the Secretariat from the different Services.

We also got an opportunity to visit the U.K. Parliament and witness live proceedings of the House of Commons besides that of visiting the Headquarters of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We also had an opportunity to see the beautiful city of London.

MAIN FACULTY MEMBERS WITH THEIR PROFILES & TOPICS COVERED

Mr. Ian Church – Director of Studies.

Ian Church worked in the House of Commons for 38 years, initially as Parliamentary Journalist for some of the most respected newspapers in Britain. From 1972 until his retirement in 2002, he worked for the Official Report (Hansard). He held the post of Editor for 13 years and exercised overall administrative and editorial control of his department with the introduction of computer technology, he spearheaded the most fundamental changes to the working methods of the Official Report. He introduced the first on-line facility for Commons Hansard for internal use within Parliament which resulted in the creation of the U.K. Parliament website. He delivered a very useful lecture on **“The administrative structure of the Westminster Parliament.”** He also arranged a guided tour of both the Houses of Parliament, the Supreme Court and the Headquarters of CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association).

Mr. Peter Riddell

Peter Riddell is a Senior Fellow of the Institute of Government and a member of the privy counsellor inquiry into the British Government’s involvement in the treatment of detainees held by overseas countries. Until this June he had been a political journalist for nearly 30 years. He has written six books.

He familiarized us on the subject **“Parliament & Politics in turmoil”** wherein the issue of inter-relation between the Parliament, politician and the Media was discussed in the light of the hung Parliament experienced in UK for the first time in its history recently. He also elucidated his personal experiences during the 1970’s and 1980’s by covering the final years of Margret Thatcher’s regime, the difficult years of John Major and then the rise & fall of Tony Blair. He made his presentation based on many a historic events witnessed by the UK Parliament.

Mr. Robert Ingram

Robert Ingram taught at Charter House, one of the country’s foremost secondary school since 1971. His particular area of responsibility was politics and economics, which he taught to advanced level for over 30 years. His main area of expertise is British Government and politics. He spoke about **“The British Constitution; the evolution of Parliamentary functions; scrutiny and influence; representation and expression; legislation; deliberation; Her Majesty’s opposition; party discipline and power of the Executive; reform; the party system; a tour d’horizon from Wilson to Cameron”**. He explained all these topics in a comprehensive manner.

Prof. Gavin Drewry

Prof. Gavin Drewry is Emeritus Professor of Public Administration at Royal Holloway, University of London, a Visiting Research Fellow in the University of Westminster and an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Law at University College, London. He spoke about the **“Reform of Parliament and the Public Sector”**. He explained about the U.K. Public Service and Civil Servant in the U.K. Civil servants are the permanent employees of the Central Government. If they want to enter politics, they must resign from

the civil service and top civil servants advise ministers but most civil servants deliver services to the public. He also acquainted us about Mr. Cameron's "Big Society" theories, viz. more powers to communities, encourage people to take active role in their communities, transfer powers from central to local government, more support to cooperative societies and publish more government data in order to provide greater openness and transparency.

Mr. Nick Beech

From 2006, Mr. Nick Beech is a Sub-Editor with responsibility for sub-editing copies, liaising with members of parliament and developing staff. He gave lectures on "**Reporting the proceedings – recruitment and training at Official Report (Hansard)**". He gave thorough knowledge about the recruitment process and Hansard training. He clarified that in the verbatim report the repetitions and redundancies are omitted and obvious mistakes are corrected. More recently, he had trained 7 new Hansards Committee Reporters who will be awarded a Diploma in Parliamentary Reporting in conjunction with City University.

Mr. Tim Williams

Mr. Tim Williams joined the Civil Service in November 1967 and worked in the Department of Trade and Industry. Throughout his career he worked in various areas of the Department, including aspects of regional and overseas trade policy, escorting overseas businessmen on programmes of visits to UK companies, and working on schemes of assistance for UK aerospace equipment companies. Tim became Parliamentary Clerk to the Department of Trade and Industry in April 1989 and for 16 years was responsible for coordinating most of the Department's Parliamentary activities. This included advising Ministers and the department's civil servants of the procedures that should be followed, for example, for parliamentary questions, debates and the passage of legislation. As Parliamentary Clerk, he worked with both Conservative and Labour Administrations, in all a total of 9 Secretaries of State and 56 junior ministers and saw almost 70 Bills receive Royal Assent. He is now an independent consultant arranging and speaking at seminars and training courses for civil servants, public bodies and other organisations, both in the UK and overseas, on Whitehall's interaction with Parliament and all aspects of Parliamentary procedures in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. He spoke about "**the Government's interface with the Parliament – the role of a government department's parliamentary Clerk**". He elaborated about the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, Ministerial Hierarchy in a Department, Central Departments, the Ministerial Code, Department for Business, innovation and skills, special advisers, the Civil Service Code, the break-up of 650 MPs of House of Commons, sitting timings of House of Commons and House of Lords, Committees and joint committees, Parliamentary Questions (Oral and Written) and Debates.

Mr. Paul Dillon-Robinson

Mr. Paul Dillon-Robinson (FCA, MBA) is the Director of Internal Audit at the House of Commons, which operates within the Office of the Chief Executive and reports to the Clerk of the House and the Audit Committee. Paul trained and qualified as a Chartered Accountant. He delivered lecture

on **“The Office of the Chief Executive and the work of Internal Audit”**. Office of the Chief Executive (OCE) supports the Chief executive of the House in his various roles, supports the Management Board in its strategic leadership of the House and helps the House Service to work together effectively. The Internal Audit Service closely work with the National Audit Office. In Internal Audit, the issues of Governance and risk Management, key control assurance, risk based audits, projects and developments, contracts with third parties, functional reviews, specialist audits, value for money, watching briefs etc. are covered. Financial control/economies in a time of financial austerity and savings, constructive challenge and continuous improvement are the main audit issues.

Mr. Andrew Walker

Mr. Andrew joined the House of Commons as Director of Finance and Administration (now Department of Human Resources and Change) in 1997. He is the House’s Director General of HR and Change and is a member of the Management Board. His primary responsibilities are “people” strategy, organization capability, diversity and change management. He is a Chartered Public Finance Accountant. He delivered lecture on **“Managing Change and the implications for Human Resources”**. He also explained the challenges for the House and where do we need to have savings.

Mr. Fergus Reid

Fergus joined the House of Commons in 1991, after jobs in social work and office maintenance. He has worked on select committees on health, foreign affairs, standards & privileges, the environment, culture, media & sport and justice. He spent four years in the Table Office. Last year Fergus stepped out of his clerkly comfort zone into a secondment with Parliament’s joint information and communications technology department, PICT, as Director of Resources with responsibility for that organisation's HR, finance, communications and strategic planning, as well as IT security for Parliament as a whole. He spoke an **“The work of the House of Commons Table Office”** and **“The Select Committee System in the House of Commons”**. The tasks of Table Office consist of order paper, Questions (urgent, oral, written), Early Day Motions, Adjournment Debates and Procedural advice. The basics of checking questions are: Is the date correct? Is it authorized? Is the Department appropriate? Is it legible, grammatical and in Parliamentary style? Is the question (a) seeking information (b) pressing for action? Is it a matter for which the Minister has responsibility? Has been asked or answered recently? Does it seek an opinion? Is it sub-judice? E-tabling facility for members of Parliament is also available so as to enable them to table oral and written questions more easily, more quickly and from remote locations. Answers to questions are formally given to the House and not to the individual Members who asked the question. These answers arrive in the Hansard. There is a new project to gather them electronically- a “Cloud” service.

Mr. Nicholas Jones

Nicholas Jones was a BBC industrial and political correspondent for thirty years (1972-2002), and is now a political commentator, author and lecturer. Nicholas covered the final years of Margaret Thatcher’s government, the difficult years for her successor John Major and then the

rise of Tony Blair and his two landslide election victories in 1997 and 2001. His latest book is "Campaign 2010: The Making of the Prime Minister", which gives a blow-by-blow account of the British general election and examines the political career of the Prime Minister David Cameron. He gave lecture own **"Parliament, politicians and the media"**.

Mr. Simon Burton

Simon Burton is Clerk of Legislation in the House of Lords, a post he has held since June 2011. Simon oversees all aspects of the legislative processes and procedures in the Lords including bills, acts, amendments and the scrutiny of delegated legislation. He also sits as a Table Clerk in the House. He spoke own **"The House of Lords, its administration and its changing constitutional position"**. He gave all the knowledge about the House of Lords and its powers. All Bills must have Lords agreement and 50 per cent of time is spent on Bills, but the Lords powers over taxation have always been very limited. About 22 per cent of sitting time is spent on debates. There are 4 Oral Questions a day and 5000 to 6000 Written Questions in a year. As on 3rd October, 2011 the total membership is 787 (+39 Absentees), of whom 181 are women and in which there are Life peers (673), Hereditary peers (92), Former Lords of Appeal, Archbishops and senior Bishops (currently 24). Members are appointed for life not elected and they come from many walks of life and active in careers and experts in their fields. Members of the Lords do not get salary, they claim expenses of £300 per day.

Mr. Jonathan Seller

Jonathan has been the Deputy Director of Human Resources for the House of Lords since 2008. He was involved in the development of a focused Human Resources strategy and Learning and Development plan that aligns with the 5 year organizational business plan of the House of Lords. He delivered a lecture on **"Human Resources Management in the House of Lords"** and explained the HR Office aims, objectives and responsibilities. Providing efficient recruitment, deployment, learning and development, performance management, appropriate conditions of service and record-keeping are their main aims. Their objective is to ensure that the appointment, appraisal and promotion of staff are conducted fairly, efficiently and effectively and payment of pay and pension are made properly, promptly and accurately.

Mr. Bob Twigger

Bob Twigger is the Director of Information Services for Members in the Department of Information Services. He delivered lecture on **"Information Services in the House of Commons"**. House of Commons Library provides research and information services for Members, online services, books, training on information resources and parliamentary material – databases and indexes. The number of customers in the Conventional Library is 650 MPs plus staff and plus public. There are 2,60, 000 bound volumes in all and the most are available for loan, subscription to 112 newspapers and 700 periodicals, 10,000 books for reference collection and 25,000 books of specialized collections. Members use the research service for speeches in the House or outside. There are 8 subject-based sections in research service

organization with 90 staff in total out of which 55 are researchers (specialists and generalists), 10 Librarians and 25 support staff.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

The British Parliament is the oldest Parliament of the World and the mother of other Parliaments around the globe. The present day, Parliament of the Great Britain comprises of elected Members from England, North Ireland, Scotland and the Wales. Parliament is the highest authority in the United Kingdom - the institution responsible for making and repealing UK Law. Parliament is made up of three parts: The House of Lords, The House of Commons and The Sovereign.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS



The **House of Lords** is the upper house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Like the House of Commons, it meets in the Palace of Westminster.

The House of Lords is the second chamber of Parliament. It is independent from, and complements the work of, the House of Commons – they share responsibility for making laws and checking government action. Bills can be introduced into either the House of Lords or the House of Commons and members of the Lords may also take on roles as Government Ministers.

Unlike the House of Commons, members of the House of Lords are appointed. Membership of the House of Lords is made up of Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal. There are currently 26 Lords Spiritual, who sit in the Lords by virtue of their ecclesiastical role in the established Church of England. The Lords Temporal make up the rest of the membership; of these, the majority are life peers who are appointed by the Monarch on the advice

of the Prime Minister, or on the advice of the House of Lords Appointments Commission.

Membership was once a right of birth to hereditary peers but, following a series of reforms, as of 1 July 2011 only 90 members sitting by virtue of a hereditary peerage remain. The number of members is not fixed; at present the House of Lords has 788 members (plus 21 who are on leave of absence or otherwise disqualified from sitting), as against the fixed 650-seat membership of the House of Commons.

The role of the House of Lords is primarily to act as a body of specialist knowledge that scrutinizes in greater detail bills that have been approved by the House of Commons. It regularly reviews and amends bills from the Commons. While the House of Lords is unable unilaterally to prevent bills passing into law (except in certain limited circumstances), its members can severely delay bills that they believe to be misguided and thereby force the government, the Commons and the general public to reconsider their decisions. In this capacity, the Lords acts as constitutional safeguard that is independent from the electoral process and that can challenge the will of the people when the majority's desires threaten key constitutional principles, human rights or rules of law. In other countries, this role would often be performed by a Supreme Court but the UK system's emphasis on Parliamentary Sovereignty – rather than Judicial Review – means that this function cannot be properly accomplished by the British court system as all judicial rulings can be overruled by parliament.

The Speech from the throne, often known as the Queen's Speech, is delivered from the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament. The House also has a minor Church of England role in that through the Lords Spiritual Church Measures must be tabled within the House. The formal title of the House of Lords is *The Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.*

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS



The House of Commons Chamber

The Chamber of Commons Chamber is where Members of Parliament (MPs) debate and vote on important issues. The main business of the House takes place here and can involve MPs putting questions to government ministers, debating issues of national importance and passing legislation.

The Speaker's Chair and the Table of the House provide a focal point in the Chamber at its north end. There are green leather benches on either side where MPs sit: looking towards the Speaker's Chair, the government sit on the left and the opposition parties on the right. The front benches are reserved for government ministers and opposition spokespeople. Only MPs are allowed to sit on the benches in the Chamber.

Ministers and the Official Opposition's shadow ministers stand at the dispatch boxes to address the House. The Mace, a ceremonial staff of office representing the authority of House of Commons, is placed on the Table of the House when it is sitting.

MPs are not allowed to speak in the space between two red lines running along the length of the Chamber, it has been claimed these lines are traditionally two swords' lengths apart to prevent MPs duelling although there is no evidence to support this.

The Leader of the House of Commons

The Leader of the House of Commons is a Government Minister and a member of the Cabinet. His main role is organizing government business in the Commons and working closely with the government's Chief Whip. The Leader of the Commons represents the House of Commons within the Government.

The current Leader of the House of Commons is the Rt Hon Sir George Young Bt MP.

The role of the Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is the government's chief financial minister. The Chancellor is responsible for raising government revenue through taxation or borrowing. Raising revenue enables the Government to put its policies into practice. The Chancellor controls all spending made by government departments.

The current Chancellor of the Exchequer is the Rt Hon George Osborne MP.

THE PRIME MINISTER OF UNITED KINGDOM

The Prime Minister's role

The Prime Minister (PM) is head of the Government of the United Kingdom. The official title is 'First Lord of the Treasury'. The PM has overall responsibility for the government's policies and, as head of the Government, is also responsible for the civil service and government agencies.

The PM selects members of the Cabinet, the main decision-making body in government. Cabinet members are usually the Secretaries of State of government departments, plus other invited Ministers and peers. The Cabinet meets each Tuesday.

The current Prime Minister is the Rt Hon David Cameron MP.

He is the 53rd Prime Minister. Margaret Thatcher was the first female PM, holding the office from 1979 to 1990.

The Prime Minister's residence in London has been Number 10 Downing Street since 1730 when it was presented by King George II as a gift to Sir Robert Walpole.

GUIDED TOUR OF BOTH THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

A guided tour through the Palace of Westminster and the Houses of Parliament was arranged by RIPA. All the participants visited the Parliament on 7th November, 2011 with the Director of Studies, Mr. Ian Church. We were taken around the building and explained the historical importance of each and every part of it.

Different items of furniture and other furnishings have been contributed by Commonwealth Countries for the Chamber of the House of Lords. India and Pakistan have given two identical ornamental doors. The door facing the seat of Lord Chancellor has been given by India and the door at the back of the seat has been given by Pakistan.

The Chambers of both the Houses are moderately sized. No specific seats are allotted to Members. Every day, both the Speaker of House of Commons and the Lord Chancellor of the House of Lords move in a formal procession to attend their respective Houses.

We had snacks and coffee/tea in the Cafeteria at Westminster Home. The arrangements for all that were made by the Course Director, Mr. Ian Church.

VISIT TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

We visited the Headquarters of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association alongwith the Course Director, Mr. Ian Church on 10th November, 2011. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) consists of the national, provincial, state and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures of the countries of the Commonwealth. The Association's mission is to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. It seeks to build an informed parliamentary community able to deepen the Commonwealth's democratic commitment and to further co-operation among its parliaments and legislatures. The mission is achieved through a strategic plan which ensures CPA activities continue to meet the changing needs to today's parliamentarians.

REPORTING, EDITING AND PUBLICATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

'Hansard' is the official name given to the verbatim recording of the proceedings of both the Houses of the British Parliament. In fact, it is quite interesting that 'Hansard' is the name of the family which was given contract to publish Parliamentary Debates in the 18th Century. The full text of debates and oral and written questions for any date since November, 1988 is available in Hansard on www.parliament.uk.

The official Report is a full report being defined as one which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument.

The Report covers (i) proceedings of the Houses and (ii) Select/Standing Committees. All the proceedings are recorded by Reporters and given to Transcribers for typing. Thereafter, all the typed copies are sent to Sub-Editors for editing etc. Members of Parliament, if they so desire, may check and make only minor changes in the transcripts of the speeches delivered by them within a period of two hours' before the text of the speeches is sent for final printing. However, no substantial alterations can be made to meaning of what was said in the House. The person, who joins the service as a Reporter or Sub-Editor goes up to the cadre of an Editor over the period of time by getting promotions.

THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

There are certain distinct aspects of the British Parliament. There exists no provision for a joint sitting of the Parliament of the United Kingdom nor is there any scheme like MPLADS available to the British Parliamentarians for local area development. The Members of British Parliament do not get any official accommodation, like their counterparts in India. They simply get accommodation allowance. Similarly, there is no committee to monitor Government Assurances in UK. A Mini Chamber for

back benchers is a distinct feature of British Parliament where they get an opportunity to discuss important issues and draw government's attention. The timings of the sittings of both the Houses differ very much. Each House of the British Parliament has a unified and single service for reporting and editing the proceedings of the House. In British Parliamentary system, the clerks of the Houses hold independent charges of their respective Departments unlike the Indian Parliamentary System.

LONDON CITY, ITS PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENT

The capital city of Britain, London, is indeed, a very neat and clean as well as green city with very low levels of pollution. It is free of dust and dirt. The standards of cleanliness are very high. There is stunning difference of maintenance of public utilities, i.e. the roads, means of transportation, parks, smooth and orderly traffic on roads that strike one at once when a comparison is drawn in respect of these utilities in the context of our own capital city, New Delhi. The weather of the city of London was also very pleasing and comfortable.

In spite of a very effective, efficient and round the clock system of public transportation i.e. buses, trains, tubes, underground metro etc., People enjoy walking. The pavements along the road sides are always full of people, children, young men and women and elderly people.

London has so many tourist places and places of historical interest and importance like the Buckingham Palace, the residence of the Queen of Britain, River Thames and huge and Palatial buildings standing along its banks, London Bridge, London eye, the Parliament Buildings, Big Ben, 10 Downing Street, the official residence of the British Prime Minister, Westminster Abbey, CPA Headquarters, Sprawling Market places known as Trafalgar Square, Oxford Street, Madam Tussad's Museum, Hyde Park to name a few.

Rains are very frequent here. It is wise to be armed with umbrella all the while when one is outdoors. The city of London is very lively one where people from all over the globe rub their shoulders with each other. People here are very courteous and helpful. We had an extensive tour of the city of London. My stay in this great city of Britain has been a memorable and life-time experience to be cherished for years together.

CONCLUSION

Overall the course was very useful, informative, stressfree and rejuvenating as it provided an exposure to the British Parliament and its procedures.

Before I conclude, I would like to make a specific mention about the true Leader-like qualities of our group Leader, Smt. Nupur Goswami, Joint Director (I), who had been very caring and co-operative throughout the course of our journey to London, our stay in London and back to New Delhi on completion of the training programme. She kept the group a well knit one.

That apart, I also take this opportunity to express my deep sense of thankfulness to the Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, Hon'ble Dr. V. K. Agnihotri and our Joint Secretary, Shri Gobind Lal for having afforded me an opportunity like this to take part in the Training on Parliamentary Administration: Benchmarking against UK Parliament at RIPA International,

London, U.K. I also thank Officers of the Training Unit (Rajya Sabha), Conference and Protocol Section and all other Sections related directly or indirectly in making excellent arrangements for our journey to and stay at London.

The Training Programme lasted for a period of two weeks beginning 31st October, 2011 to 11th November, 2011. After completion of the training programme, all the members of our team visited Europe for a week and we returned to New Delhi in the forenoon of 19th November, 2011.

Submitted please.

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