

Petr Kolář – Štěpán Pecháček – Jindřiška Syllová: *Parlament České republiky 1993–2001 (The Parliament of the Czech Republic 1993–2001)*
Prague 2002: Linde, 296 pp.

The short list of works by Czech authors on parliamentarism and parliaments grew three years ago with the publication of the book, *Parlament České republiky 1993–2001 (The Parliament of the Czech Republic 1993–2001)*, co-authored by three employees of the Parliamentary Institute, an institute that provides service to the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Two of the authors – Jindřiška Syllová and Petr Kolář – are also university lecturers specialising in this subject.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first part, the book's 'General Introduction', the authors acquaint readers with the evolution of parliamentarism in the Czech Republic and with the basic variables that affect its composition and the representative function of parliament, i.e. political parties, the political party system and its legal regulation, and the electoral system. In the second part, 'MPs, Senators, and Parliament', the authors immediately proceed to the book's core interest and focus their attention on the legal provisions that refer to the political mandates of MPs and senators (the creation of a mandate, immunity, salary) and the organisation of parliament (rules of procedure, parliamentary bodies, committees, subcommittees, commissions, parliamentary clubs, and the bureau of parliament). In the third part, 'The Function of Parliament', the authors describe parliament's legislative function (in a detailed account of the legislative process), along with other functions of parliament, especially its creative function in relation to the government and the president. The text is supplemented with a large number of tables and graphs that illustrate the legislative function and the composition of parliament. The descriptions here are comprehensive and thorough and are definitely worth studying. But although the authors

put forth some interesting and thought-provoking interpretations, they are unfortunately rarely substantiated or discussed (see, for example, MP activism and the sources of activism, voting unity, extension of law-making activities).

The book's title and the authors' aspirations seemed to promise that this publication would contribute a scholarly social-scientific study to the growing number of textbooks on constitutional law and parliamentarism, as opposed to a legal treatment of the subject, and however much one must welcome the publication of this work, some critical points must be made. After finishing the book, readers would be excused for concluding that the study has not fulfilled the expectations and assumptions of quality. The reason for this is most likely that the team of authors, comprised of two lawyers and one political sociologist, were unable to go beyond the limits of their institutional affiliation. As employees of the Parliamentary Institute, they seem to have found it difficult to comment openly on some aspects of how parliamentarism works in the Czech Republic, and they have endeavoured instead to maintain a relatively neutral viewpoint. Perhaps for this reason also they focus more on surface descriptions of laws rather than going deeper to describe how the legislation works, whom laws give power to, how actors use these provisions to influence decisions, etc. The style in which the book was written, more a description of legal provisions than it is an analytical text, seems even itself to reflect a tilt in the team of authors toward the side of the lawyers.

The book consequently suffers from several flaws, which detract from its readability and its total value. A main problem is that the work oscillates between being an independently authored work presenting a critical examination of particular social phenomena and a text issued by the very institution it refers to. While the book is indeed an independent piece of work that was published by a publisher with no ties to the Parliament