

Making these debates available in official form was first proposed by Professor Norman Ward late in 1961, in a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Hon. Roland Michener. It was subsequently taken up by the Parliamentary Librarian, Mr. Erik Spicer, as a project of Parliament for Canada's Centennial. Professor Ward had never expected to be able to organize the work, and I was approached in 1962 and the project was presented to Parliament and approved in May, 1963.

Various methods of proceeding with this vast debate of 1867-1868 were attempted, and ultimately it was found necessary, owing to the interleaving of reports, to produce a whole typed MS. of the Commons Debates, running to 1515 legal-size pages, about 600,000 words.

Here I must make kind acknowledgement for assistance in every respect to the Parliamentary Librarian, Mr. Erik Spicer, and to his staff, especially to the Associate Librarian, M. Guy Sylvestre, and the Assistant Librarian Miss Pamela Hardisty; in Halifax to Mrs. Mary Gilbert, who typed the whole MS, and to Mr. J. J. Tepas who laboured long and conscientiously on galley proof, and who helped me with page proof.

The imperfections in this version are numerous and frequently obvious; the reports are often uneven; they are certainly incomplete; there are places where one even has to strain sometimes for the sense; but they are the only version we have, or can have. Indeed they prove that official reporting had advantages, after all, whatever the Canadian Parliament may have thought of the idea before Alexander Mackenzie finally brought it in, in 1875. But, still more, the newspaper version of the House of Commons, 1867-1868, knots and all, has the strong grain of the best of Parliament in it; and with this cheerful reflection, Parliament redresses the decision of a hundred years ago, and presents its debates of 1867-8.

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