

address by the new minister of finance so there was no opportunity to discuss the Riel case on that day. Finally the issue came to a climax on 15 and 16 April.

The first of these days was devoted to a lengthy and, at times, heated debate between those demanding an amnesty for Riel (mainly, but not exclusively, French-speaking members) and those who saw Riel as an outlaw who was not entitled to sit in the honourable House of Commons. On 15 April Bowell moved his motion to expel Riel. Two amendments were promptly offered.

The first amendment to Bowell's motion for expulsion was one which stood no chance of passing. It was put forward by Joseph-Alfred Mousseau from Bagot and seconded by L.-F.-G. Baby from Joliette (both Conservatives). The amendment asked for a full and complete pardon for all "acts, crimes and offences that may have been committed in the Province of Manitoba during the [1869-1870] disturbances".⁸ This was too sweeping an absolution for Justice Minister A.-A. Dorion and the Quebec Liberal members to accept, and most joined with Ontario Liberals to defeat the amendment, 164 to 27.

The second amendment sought to delay the decision to expel Riel until the select committee of 1 April had reported on the causes of the Red River insurrection, including the promises of amnesty allegedly made to "the actors" in them. This moderate approach was devised by the Hon. Luther H. Holton, a veteran and experienced Liberal representing Châteauguay, who was close to the Mackenzie cabinet. The Hon. Malcolm Cameron, another long serving Liberal (Ontario South) seconded Holton's amendment. This course of action was supported by a rising young Quebec member who had entered the House for the first time in the recent election. Wilfrid Laurier, member for Arthabaska in the Eastern Townships, declared that members had no right to expel Riel before they had seen evidence of the truth of the charges made against him. This they would gain from the findings of the select committee. It was the voice of reason and conciliation that would be heard many times in the future throughout Laurier's career. Holton's suggestion of a stay of proceedings did not satisfy an excited House and his amendment too was defeated, 117-76. Mackenzie, Blake and Macdonald all rejected the course of action proposed.

The way was now clear for the division on the main question, the Bowell-Schultz motion that Riel, having failed to appear in the House on 9 April, be expelled. This question was put to the vote on 16 April. There could be no doubt of the sentiment of the chamber: the motion was carried 124 to 68. The prime minister was to be found among those speaking against Riel. The Manitoba member was a fugitive from justice since there were no grounds to consider Thomas Scott's death a legitimate execution by political authority. It was, rather, a crime against humanity. The issue of whether an amnesty had been promised by the late government should be considered a separate question and investigated by the select committee. Laurier, together with most of the Quebec Liberals, voted against Bowell's motion. But the House had spoken decisively and following the vote the election of Louis Riel to the House of Commons was formally annulled.

It was not to be the end of Riel's political aspirations. The select committee, under the chairmanship of Félix Geoffrion, Liberal member for Verchères, reported on 22 May, only days before the end of the 1874 session. It reached no conclusions but assembled a mass of evidence from 21 witnesses and examination of hundreds of documents over 37 meetings.

⁸ *Journals*, 15 April 1874, p. 65.