

Preface

This is the fourth volume in the series of reconstituted debates of the House of Commons. Its publication continues the project initiated under my predecessor, former Parliamentary Librarian Erik Spicer, to reconstruct the parliamentary record from 1867 through 1874, before the official reporting of debates was established. The first volume was issued in 1967 to mark Canada's centennial year.

Prior to 1875 the only substantive record of speeches delivered in the House was to be found in the major newspapers of the day. At the time, the fledgling Library of Parliament clipped various press articles recounting debates in Parliament and pasted them into scrapbooks. These have become known as the "Scrapbook Debates," and have provided most of the source material used in producing this volume.

In reconstructing and publishing the early debates of Parliament, the Library has been fortunate to collaborate with distinguished scholars and academics. During the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. Peter Waite of Dalhousie University, a well-known historian of the Confederation period, edited three volumes of early debates. Dr. Norman Ward of the University of Saskatchewan – whose reputation as a teacher and lecturer approaches the legendary – originally undertook the editing of this fourth volume. Sadly, he passed away before he could finish, and Pamela Hardisty, former Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, carried on the project. Dr. Duncan McDowall of Carleton University has contributed the lively and comprehensive historical introduction.

As an historian, I believe there is significant and enduring value in recovering and preserving such important source material. With the publication of these reconstituted debates, the thoughts and deliberations of Canada's first parliamentarians will reach a larger audience, adding to our collective understanding of this country and its people. As Parliamentary Librarian, I feel proud to have played a role in bringing this publication to fruition, and fortunate to have done so during the tenure of House Speaker Peter Milliken, whose keen interest in all things parliamentary is exemplified in his support for this initiative.

I extend my sincere thanks to the many people who contributed to this project through its various stages. Naming them all would require a separate volume, but I must single out the following few for their extraordinary contributions: Michael Graham and Cynthia Hubbertz who, with the assistance of Teresa Ray, kept this project on course; and researchers Louis Brilliant, H el ene De Celles and the late Gary King, whose work was invaluable. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the fine team at the House of Commons Parliamentary Publications Service for their ongoing practical support and expert assistance, crucial to the successful completion of this undertaking.

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