

April 18, 1872

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 18, 1872

The **SPEAKER** took the chair at 3 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

A number of petitions were received.

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TREATY OF WASHINGTON

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD presented a message from His Excellency submitting the correspondence on the subject of the Treaty of Washington which was read by The Speaker.

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FAVOURITISM TO A GOVERNMENT ORGAN

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE said he observed the leader of the House had communicated this message to one of the newspapers in the city of Ottawa, before he communicated it to the House. The House was entitled to some explanation on his point. If newspapers favourable to the Government were to receive documents of this kind in advance of the House, it was clearly a violation of the usages that prevailed in parliamentary history. It was quite out of question that the House should look to newspapers for intelligence in advance, of serious and important public documents that were to be laid before the House next day. He desired to know from Sir John A. Macdonald if this were done without his knowledge, or connivance, and how it came that the newspaper obtained that information.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD admitted that it had occurred with his knowledge, and was done by himself. He said he had told a person connected with the newspaper what the substance of the communication would be, and that in doing so he had broken no rule of Parliamentary practice, for the same thing was done with regard to the Queen's Speech.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON differed entirely from Sir John A. Macdonald on the point. He thought it was treating Parliament with contumely, and he defied him to recite an instance from British parliamentary practice to justify his act. The substance of the Queen's Speech might be communicated before Parliament was convened; but in this case Parliament was in Session, and it was by

a motion that the Executive Government were obliged to bring down papers. He (Hon. Mr. Holton) was jealous of the privileges of Parliament, and complained that the leader of the House had now violated them.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD said there was no pleasing hon. gentlemen opposite. The great attack upon him had been that he was too reticent on this subject, and now the complaint was that he had now made matters public.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE said the leader of the Government had stated at the opening of the Session that he could not bring the papers down then, and the day before yesterday he said he hoped to bring them down the next day. He did not bring them down, but gave their substance on that very day to a newspaper.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD said that one of the papers was dated the 15th of April, so that the Government could not have brought them down at the opening of the Session.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON asserted that the Premier had deliberately withheld papers from the House which he had communicated to a newspaper. He had promised to bring them down yesterday if able. He did not bring them down, although he was able, as shown by his communicating them to a newspaper.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD contended that the government had a perfect right to make public any information they pleased.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON argued that it was a breach of privilege to give information to the public which was withheld from Parliament, while Parliament was in Session.

The matter was dropped.

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FISHERIES

Hon. Mr. BLAKE before proceeding to the Orders of the Day wanted to know when the Report of the Fisheries would be brought down.

Hon. Mr. TUPPER said the Report was being prepared and would be brought down at an early date.

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QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Mr. MASSON (Terrebonne): Whether it is the intention of the