

CANADA

Debates of the House of Commons

for the

First session of the First Parliament of the Dominion of Canada called for the despatch of business on the 6th. day of November, 1867.

Wednesday, 6th November, 1867

The Parliament met this day for the despatch of business at three p.m.

The Clerk took the chair and the Sergeant-at-arms announced Rene Kimber, Esquire, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, with a message, that His Excellency, The Governor General, desires the immediate attendance of this Honourable House in the Senate Chamber.

Accordingly the Members went to attend His Excellency in the Senate Chambers;

Where being,

The Honourable the Speaker of the Senate said;—

Honourable Gentlemen, and Gentlemen of the House of Commons;

His Excellency the Governor General does not see fit to declare the causes of His summoning the present Parliament of the Dominion of Canada until a Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen according to law, but that to-morrow, at the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon, His Excellency will declare the causes of His calling this Parliament.

And the Members being returned;

Sir John A. Macdonald said that the House having just been instructed by the representative of Her Majesty to proceed to elect a Speaker, he begged to call the attention of the House to the discharge of that duty. Great qualifications were required in a member of this House who would worthily occupy that high, honourable and distinguished position. He should be a man of parliamentary experience, well acquainted with the practice of parliament, versed in the mode of conducting the business of this House, and able to decide promptly and correctly the various questions of practice and order which would come before Parliament, his demeanour at the same time must be agreeable and courtly. He believed that on his mentioning the name of the honourable gentleman who he would propose should be called to the Speaker's

chair, all who knew that honourable gentleman, would agree with him that he possessed all the requisites for the position. He had much pleasure in moving that the Hon. James Cockburn, member for the West Riding of Northumberland, do take the chair. Mr. Cockburn had sat in the Legislature of the Province of Canada during two Parliaments having been thrice elected for the same constituency, and twice by acclamation. During the period he had been in Parliament he had been an active member, he at once took such a position that ere long he was invited to become a member of the Government. In 1864, he entered the Government of which he (Sir John) had the honour to be a member, taking the office of Solicitor-General for Upper Canada, and he could testify to the great assistance which, in that capacity, he gave to him (Sir John) as Attorney-General and leader of the House; and all his colleagues could, in like manner, speak of the skill with which he managed all the affairs of his department. In all the legislation, specially applying to Upper Canada, he trusted greatly to the assistance of the Solicitor-General, and he was gratified, therefore, to speak of the ability and legal lore which Mr. Cockburn displayed acting as his colleague. To these gentlemen who had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Cockburn, he would say nothing as to his demeanour as a gentleman, and the courteous style of his address. He felt that he need say nothing further as to the hon. gentleman's qualifications, and would now, therefore, move that the Hon. James Cockburn do take the chair.

Hon. Mr. Cartier seconded the motion, supporting it in a few remarks in French substantially to the same effect as those of the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dufresne addressed the House in French, expressing his dissatisfaction at the nomination of Mr. Cockburn, on the ground that that gentleman could not speak the French language. He thought it was to be