

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 11, 1967

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

### SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST CANADIAN  
PRIME MINISTER

**Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the birthday of one of our greatest statesmen, Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada.

That Canada exists today is probably the result of the effort and determination of Sir John A. Macdonald more than any other man. It is therefore fitting that in this year, the one hundredth anniversary of confederation, we should pay a very special tribute to this man and what he accomplished. It is equally fitting that such a tribute should be made on this day, the anniversary of his birth; and in this house, where the destiny of the country he helped create was debated.

● (2:40 p.m.)

Like so many great Canadians, Macdonald was not born in this country. He came to Canada as a boy when his father and mother emigrated from Scotland. It was in a rough, new country that he grew up and gained an education, and it was in the building of a new country that he won the fame that goes with great and lasting achievement.

We remember Macdonald chiefly as the principal architect of our confederation. Credit for bringing about confederation is shared by many men and is not Macdonald's alone, but it was he who provided the most determined leadership and who went on, after the political framework of federation was accomplished, to endow Canada with the economic sinews of nationhood through building the transcontinental railway, the opening of the west and the encouragement of industry. Under Macdonald the federation established in 1867 was extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific to embrace most of what is Canada today.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, 76 years ago, the house was informed of the passing of Sir John A. Macdonald. Another prominent Canadian, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Leader of the Opposition at

the time, rose to pay tribute to his friend and political opponent. The words he uttered on that occasion will live on. Here is what the then Leader of the Opposition said:

It is not an exaggeration to say that from the day he entered Parliament, the life of Sir John A. Macdonald became the history of Canada. He was associated with every event, every fact, every development which brought Canada from the position it then held—that of two small provinces with nothing in common save their allegiance, united only on paper—to the present state of progress it has achieved.

After mentioning the issues on which he failed to agree with Macdonald, Laurier went on:

I am happy to erase such differences and to remember only the great services he rendered to our country—to recall that his actions always showed impartial views, a great fund of resources, the highest level of intellectual concepts and, above all, a prophetic vision far above the events of the day and over all that, a patriotic devotion to the prosperity of Canada, to the progress of Canada, to the glory of Canada.

[English]

Macdonald invariably recognized that the touchstone of government policy in Canada had to be understanding and co-operation between the two founding peoples. His close working association with Sir Georges-Étienne Cartier was an illustration of his devotion to this principle.

We contemporary Canadians are not given to the worship of heroes, and we have not endowed Macdonald with those superhuman attributes which have the property of heroes. Macdonald's achievements are perhaps enhanced by the fact that we know him as a warmly human personality who made mistakes and knew adversity, yet lived a rich and full life and realized the satisfaction that comes with the fulfilment of a great ambition.

What is the relevance of Macdonald's character and achievements for Canadians today? Many of the problems with which he dealt are still with us—how to ensure unity while preserving the diversity which enriches Canadian life; how to achieve genuine and worth while national development. But we are faced, as we well know, with many new problems undreamed of in his time, problems brought about by rapid technological change, by the emergence of revolutionary new forces in the world around us and by the urgent