

denominations above \$4 would be issued by the chartered banks against a standard national value.²⁹ The introduction of a national, decimalized currency was reinforced by an Act that regularized the issuance of bank charters and honed the corporate governance of banks.³⁰ Other Acts fine-tuned the activities of insurance companies, issued railway charters, appointed port wardens, and made provision for servicing the federal loan taken out to underwrite the 1869 purchase of the Hudson's Bay Company lands in the Northwest. Preparations were approved for the taking of Canada's first federal, decennial census. Indian treaties were discussed. Bills were paid: \$200,000, for instance, for "unavoidable expenditure" incurred in repelling the 1870 Fenian raids. The House even found time to regulate its own affairs; an Act was passed to secure the independence of Parliament by preventing members of Parliament from accepting any fee, allowance or emolument from the Government of Canada beyond their stipulated salary.³¹ Cumulatively, these Acts constituted the process of what political scientists today call "state formation," the bolting together of a civil society by means of regulation and standardization. The Confederation was being made to function as a cohesive and coordinated whole, whether that entailed answering the questions of a census taker or taking out a policy with an insurance company.

When focused on these issues of nation building, the House worked with efficiency and camaraderie. There was even time for the occasional flash of humour. Cartier could, for instance, put aside the cloak of de facto government leader and deprecate himself: "... it was generally supposed that when lawyers once got up they never knew when to sit down . . ." ³² In response to a question concerning the impact of the tariff on flour in the Maritimes, Finance Minister Hincks promised "to make a statement soon." "To make a flowery statement," one-time Finance Minister Alexander Galt quipped.³³ At other times, members revealed their remarkable erudition, quoting the classics to bolster a point or, as Liberal Edward Blake was often wont to indulge, paring the fine points of constitutional law. At times like these, the House indeed seemed the prism of a young nation fast growing accustomed to its own diversity and beginning to display trust in its democratic deliberation. This mood was perhaps facilitated by announcement by Hincks that the young Dominion was running a budgetary surplus estimated at \$2.4 million. Fiscal security bred expansive nationalism.

All the while, the reporters in the Strangers Gallery scrambled to keep pace with the parliamentarians below. By early April, a mood of restlessness seemed to creep into the House's deliberations. Spring was here and parliamentarians' thoughts turned to family and constituents. Cartier hinted at an impending prorogation, but pleaded for a few more days to tie up the loose ends of the British Columbia resolution and the attempt to activate a Pacific railway. Finally, on 14 April, the House convened early, pushed through a last few items of supply, voted to ensure that their recently elected Manitoba colleagues be paid for the entire session, and then paraded to the Senate chamber to witness the Governor General give Royal Assent to the 57 Acts they had passed. The House was then prorogued. Called to return to Ottawa on 25 May, the members must have wasted little time scurrying to the train station for the journey home.³⁴ The unsettled

29. 34 Vict. Cap. 4.

30. 34 Vict. Cap. 5.

31. 34 Vict. Cap. 19.

32. 8 March 1871.

33. 1 March 1871.

34. The call for members to return in May presents a mystery. The House would not in fact reconvene until 11 April 1872. The May 1871 date may have reflected the anticipated return of Macdonald from Washington and the necessity of some sort of approval process in Parliament for the agreement. Macdonald did in fact put his