

## Preface

It is a pleasure to mark the publication of this fifth volume of the reconstituted debates of the House of Commons. As with its companion volumes covering the parliamentary sessions for the years 1867 to 1871, the *House of Commons Debates* 1872 have been reconstructed by drawing upon contemporary newspaper reports in the absence of an official record. The impetus for the series came from former Parliamentary Librarian, Erik Spicer. The first volume, covering the debates for 1867–68, was completed with his guidance and support, and was published in 1967 to mark Canada's Centennial.

Before 1875, speeches delivered in the House of Commons were reported in the major newspapers of the day, notably the *Ottawa Times* and the *Toronto Globe*. The Library of Parliament clipped these reports and pasted them into scrapbooks; these became known as the "Scrapbook Debates." Together with the "Cotton Debates" – an unofficial condensed version of the year's debates produced by the editor of the *Times*, James Cotton, these provided most of the source material for the present volume.

The publication of the 1872 Debates marks significant progress in the overall project as envisaged by Erik Spicer. *Hansard*, the official, verbatim reporting of the House of Commons debates, began in 1875, so there remain two more years to be covered. Dr. David Farr's careful editorship is warmly appreciated. His Introduction, written in 1991, provides insight into the political sensibilities of Canada's first parliamentarians as well as an entertaining account of the issues of the time.

Throughout this project, the Library of Parliament has been fortunate to have engaged a number of distinguished scholars. Dr. Peter Waite of Dalhousie University, a well-known historian of the Confederation period, compiled three volumes covering the first three sessions of the First Parliament (1867–68, 1869 and 1870). He was succeeded by Dr. Norman Ward of the University of Saskatchewan, a leading scholar of parliamentary history, who undertook the editing of the 1871 volume. Sadly, Dr. Ward passed away before he could complete it, and Pamela Hardisty, former Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, completed the project.

As Parliamentary Librarian, I am pleased to have helped bring this publication to fruition, with the support and encouragement of the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable Peter Milliken.

I would like to thank the many staff of the Library of Parliament who contributed to the compilation of this volume – in particular, Michael Graham and Cynthia Hubbertz who, assisted by Teresa Ray, kept the project on course; and Louis Brillant, whose research was crucial to the project. I would also like to commend the fine team at the House of Commons Parliamentary Publications Service, whose continuing practical support and expert assistance was invaluable.

William R. Young  
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