

- The longer version of a speech is generally preferred since it has been discovered that journalists rarely put words in the mouths of members they were reporting. More often they abridged the remarks of speakers with whose opinions they had little sympathy. Sometimes words have been inserted or removed in order to give a clearer understanding of what might have been said.
- Spellings have been corrected, sometimes in members' names, frequently in geographical place names. To reporters from Ontario, the distant spaces of the Atlantic Provinces, Manitoba and especially British Columbia, were a *tabula rasa*.

The reader should bear in mind, however, that it will never be possible to construct a wholly accurate rendering of the early debates of Parliament. The text here presented is as clear and objective as human intervention, more than 120 years later, can provide.

Now that the reconstitution of the early Commons debates has reached its final lap, it is appropriate to say a word about the genesis of the project and those who guided it. Norman Ward of the University of Saskatchewan, a noted student of Canada's Parliament, was the first to conceive the project, making his interest known to the Hon. Roland Michener, Speaker of the House, 1957-1962, who strongly endorsed the proposal. Erik J. Spicer, Parliamentary Librarian, saw the plan as a worthy Centennial project for Parliament. The Speakers of the Day, the Hon. Sydney J. Smith of the Senate and the Hon. Lucien Lamoureux of the Commons, gave the project their blessing.<sup>2</sup>

The task of preparing the reconstituted debates has been carried out by three editors. Over a ten-year span from 1967 to 1976, P. B. Waite of Dalhousie University published reconstituted debates of both the Senate and the House of Commons for the first three sessions of the First Parliament, 1867-1868, 1869 and 1870. Norman Ward of the University of Saskatchewan then edited the 1871 session of the Commons Debates, with an important historical introduction later provided by Duncan McDowall. David Farr of Carleton University subsequently edited the Commons Debates for the final session of the First Parliament in 1872, for the two tumultuous sessions of the Second Parliament in 1873, and for the First Session of the Third Parliament in 1874. In every case the original English text had been translated into French by Government of Canada Translation Services. The bilingual texts were then transcribed by the Directorate of Parliamentary Publications of the House of Commons into the format of the contemporary *Hansard*.

The Commons Debates for the five sessions from 1871 to 1874 were all brought to publication between 2009 and 2014, as the fruits of a twenty-year project co-ordinated by several capable members of the staff of the Library of Parliament. Students of the history of Canada's Parliament will be forever in their debt.

The reconstitution of the early Debates of the House of Commons, in English and French, is now complete. The remaining task, and it is not a slight one, is to prepare a French language text of the early debates of the Senate. When that task is completed Canada will possess a bilingual text of all the proceedings of its federal Parliament from its origins in 1867 to the present day. As a mine of material on the political life and history of Canada during the first

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the original project to reconstitute the early debates of the Parliament of Canada is found in David Farr, "Reconstituting the Early Debates of the Parliament of Canada", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 15 (Spring 1992), pp. 26-32.