

March 30, 1874

indicated, and that there were strong personal and political reasons for their being earnest in their attention to legislative duties they would be called upon to discharge.

He believed this House to be the result of the free choice of the people. (*Hear, hear.*) A great national crisis had occurred; popular feeling and sentiment were keenly alive to the importance of the present and the coming time, and he believed they had made their choice wisely and well. (*Hear, hear.*) But there were other motives which were not wanting to induce the members of this House to earnest exertion. The questions which would come before them for consideration were such as might well be expected to tax to the utmost the energies of any deliberative assembly.

He had heard a remark—and he would not have referred to it but for the fact that it had already obtained considerable publicity—that this Parliament was not to have the advantages which were generally afforded to similar legislative bodies. He had heard it said that the Government were not to be favoured with any active or vigorous opposition. (*Hear, hear.*) He for one would extremely regret were this the case. He would be very sorry indeed if it should so happen that the country would not enjoy the benefit of the ability, experience, and energy, out of office, as well as it had in office, of his right hon. friend the member for Kingston (Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald), and his hon. friends from Cumberland (Hon. Mr. Tupper), Cardwell (Hon. Mr. Cameron), and Northumberland, New Brunswick (Hon. Mr. Mitchell).

It would indeed be a misfortune if the Government did not enjoy the advantage of criticism from such fair and candid critics. He trusted the rumour was not correct, but if it were, it only the more behoved the supporters of the Government to exercise an independent, although friendly criticism towards the measure and acts of the Administration. He trusted he might be at liberty to indulge the hope that when the members of this House were called upon to give an account of their stewardship they might be able to claim that they had achieved what was expected of their predecessors, but what they had not been able to do, and that they had contributed their part to the building up and consolidating of our young Dominion. (*Cheers.*)

There was another phase of this Parliament which presented itself to his mind. A new Government was meeting a new House. It was not necessary for the Administration to ask from Parliament a fair and generous trial. Upon that question they had appealed to the highest and most potent tribunal, the constituencies; and upon that question the constituencies had pronounced. Far be it for him to assume for himself to speak the sentiments or intentions of the members of this House; yet he ventured to assure the Ministry that if they did, as they would do, their very best to administer the affairs of the country with a single eye to the public welfare, with a view to promoting the best interests of the people and not alone to the retention of their places; if they exhibited that statesmanship and sagacity which Canada had a right to expect from her foremost men, they would receive the earnest support, sympathy, and co-operation of the House of Commons. (*Loud cheers.*) Nay, he would even promise them more; if their course was to be regulated by the principles to which he had just referred, they would also be

supported by the good sense, public spirit, intelligence, and patriotism of their fellow countrymen. (*Loud cheers.*)

Referring to the resolutions which were before the House, he said he thought they approached the consideration of them with a certain advantage. The Premier (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) had taken the country into his confidence already with regard to his public measures in a manner which, so far as he knew, was unprecedented. It was true that sometimes when a great national question was stirring the public mind party leaders had been obliged to inform the country of the special views they entertained upon that particular question; but he knew of no other instance in the history of our country when the Premier, on the eve of a general election, had explained the details of the policy he intended to carry out.

Upon first looking at the Speech he perceived that there was in it abundant matter for congratulation, but closer scrutiny disclosed what he took to be a sharp sting in its tail. The Ministry had been under the necessity of informing the House that there was a deficit in the finances of the country but he was glad to say the responsibility did not lie at their doors. (*Cheers.*) Much as they might regret having to convey such information to the House, there was no reason for shirking the task, because the fault, if fault there was, lay upon others, whose duty it was to explain to the House and the country the origin of that fault. He had some idea—imperfect it might be—of how the mischief arose. It did not require much financial skill to tell what the result of enormous expenditure which this country had witnessed since Confederation must at last result in. It would have required a very great increase indeed in the revenue to prevent the deficit which many had for years predicted. Unhappily deficits could only be met in one way—that was by increased taxation and he supposed that increase of taxation meant a re-adjustment of the tariff. He thought he had the authority of his right hon. friend from Kingston (Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) saying that such adjustment was necessary. What the nature of the re-adjustment ought to be it would be premature to discuss till the policy of the Ministry was disclosed; but he hoped and believed that the measure they would introduce on the subject would be of such nature as to cause no uneasiness in commercial circles. (*Hear, hear.*)

It was gratifying to learn, however, from this same paragraph of the Speech, that the estimates were to be framed with as much regard to economy as was consistent with the efficiency of the public service. He believed the phrase was a little stereotyped, but he relied upon this Administration to make it not a mere matter of form, but a real matter of substance. (*Hear, hear.*) He ventured to tell them that the people of this country were deeply interested in the question of economy, and no Government could better win a place in the esteem and respect of the people of this country than by introducing and carrying out a system of rigid economy in the administration of public affairs. Parsimony was not needed; the people were perfectly willing to give a full share of their means when they were assured that the money would be expended for proper purposes.

He could well conceive the difficulty which the Government must have in curbing an expenditure, the foundation for which had