

Foreword

The Second Session of the Second Parliament opened in Ottawa on October 23, 1873 with the Speech from the Throne. The entire session was given over the debate on the Throne Speech, which was in fact an extended debate on the Pacific scandal and ended with the resignation of Macdonald and his Ministry. In this seventh volume of the reconstituted debates of the House of Commons, Canadians can witness for the first time in published form an extraordinary and tumultuous period in our history, paralleling our growth as a nation.

The Second Session opened with six new members representing Prince Edward Island, which had joined Confederation the previous session. By-elections had changed the composition of the House somewhat, of most interest perhaps the election of Louis Riel in Provencher. In the Throne Speech, Governor General Lord Dufferin departed from established practice, and at once charged the government to deal with the Pacific Railway question, left over from the first session at prorogation, and to go forward with building a transcontinental railway. He also read into the record extensive correspondence with the Imperial government on related issues, such as the Oaths Bill, famously disallowed by Her Majesty. These documents have been reproduced in part in this volume; complete versions are available in the *Journals of the House of Commons*.

The rest of the session is devoted to debate on this Throne Speech, and includes fiery, extensive speeches on the part of the government (Sir John A. Macdonald) and the opposition (the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie). In the end, on November 5, Macdonald resigned, Mackenzie formed a new government, Parliament was prorogued and in the ensuing election, early in 1874, the Conservatives were ultimately defeated.

My thanks are due to Sonia L'Heureux and her staff at the Library of Parliament for ensuring that this fascinating and pivotal era in Canadian Parliamentary history is now available to scholars and to all Canadians with the release - both in print, and yet more widely accessible, online - of this rich resource.

Hon. Andrew Scheer, M.P.
Speaker of the House of Commons
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