

## Foreword

Following Confederation in 1867, the House of Commons kept no official record of its debates until 1875. Speeches of members were reported extensively in the newspapers of the time, but the House lacked a full and authoritative account of its deliberations.

As a project to mark the Centennial of Canada's Confederation, the Parliamentary Librarian, Erik Spicer, with the support of the Speaker of the House, the Honourable Roland Michener, decided to commission an account that would reconstitute the debates for the missing years. It would draw primarily upon newspaper reports of the day and would be as definitive as possible. The *House of Commons Debates 1872* is the fifth volume in the series to be published.

In 1872, the young Dominion of Canada was vibrant and optimistic – marked by economic development and increasing political self-confidence. It was a time when, as Sir John A. Macdonald put it, the gristle of Confederation would harden into bone. Trade issues were hotly debated, with parliamentarians concerned that the provisions of the Treaty of Washington dealing with shared fisheries and access to the St. Lawrence River unduly favoured American interests and circumvented Canadian sovereignty. Another topic of debate was enabling legislation to finish construction of the transcontinental railway, linking the new provinces of British Columbia and Manitoba with the rest of Canada. In the course of its deliberations, Parliament found that federal plans for development of the country sometimes clashed with provincial priorities. Dual representation, which permitted Ontario and Quebec members of Parliament to sit in provincial legislatures concurrently, provoked strong controversy during the session. These were some of the issues that occupied the House of Commons during the 1872 session, and are in turn reflected in the Debates.

I would like to commend the Parliamentary Librarian, Dr. William Young, for overseeing this important project. The publication of this volume is another step in completing the history of Canada's parliamentary record.

Great thanks are also due to the editor of this volume, Dr. David Farr, for his fine work; and to the small army of historians, librarians, translators, transcribers, editors and parliamentary staff, who should take pride in having so painstakingly recreated this account of the debates of the House of Commons for 1872.

Hon. Peter Milliken, M.P.  
Speaker of the House of Commons  
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