

## Introduction

This edition of the Debates of the House of Commons for the First Session of Canada's Third Parliament, held in the year 1874, is the eighth and final volume published by the Library of Parliament to reconstitute the earliest debates of the House from sources of the time. The Canadian Senate had already begun keeping a record of its debates in 1871, and in the session of 1874 a reform-minded House of Commons would decide to do likewise. Official reporting of the Commons Debates in the Canadian *Hansard* would begin in 1875, with the Second Session of the Third Parliament.

Our knowledge of the Senate and House debates prior to the establishment of the official records of the two chambers is derived from the private verbatim reports of the newspapers of the day, for whose readers the deliberations of Parliament were a subject of high interest. Such parliamentary reporting in the press was often quite extensive. For example, the *Toronto Globe*, the newspaper which, during the years immediately after Confederation, devoted the most space to reporting the Senate and the House of Commons, often assigned half or more of several of its large nine-column pages to the proceedings in Parliament. With a page size of 20 x 30 inches, these long columns of dense Victorian type gave a substantial account of what was done and said.

The newspaper accounts of the debates were collected by the staff of the Library of Parliament and pasted into large ledgers, from which they have gained the name "Scrapbook Debates". Until the reconstitution project issued its first volume in 1967, the "Scrapbook Debates" in the Library were our most convenient source for a record of the early debates in Parliament.<sup>1</sup> The newspaper reporting of the debates was frankly partisan since a political point of view was a hall-mark of the Canadian press in the mid-Victorian period. Partisanship was most usually shown by the shortening of the opposing party's contribution to a debate and a fuller reporting of your own party's position. Occasionally distortions and half-truths were resorted to in the political wars of the newspapers but lapses of this sort are less common.

For the 1874 session the fullest account of the proceedings of the House and Senate is to be found in the *Toronto Globe*. This is hardly surprising. The *Globe* had been established in 1844 by the man who founded and dominated the Reform/Liberal political faction in Ontario, George Brown. In 1874 the *Globe* was celebrating the accession to office of the first national Reform/Liberal government, led by Brown's colleague Alexander Mackenzie. Brown, no longer in the thick of political conflict since an electoral defeat in 1867, remained a close adviser to Mackenzie. He was present in Ottawa during much of the 1874 parliamentary session, having been appointed to the Senate in December 1873. Thus the *Globe* spared no effort to ensure that the speeches of the virtuous Grits in the House and Senate were fully and faithfully reported. As the newspaper with the largest circulation in Canada, the *Globe* was a

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<sup>1</sup> There have been difficulties for the editor and transcribers in preparing this edition of the 1874 Commons Debates. The ledgers containing the *Globe's* reports for that year have been unaccountably lost from the Parliamentary Library. Thus it has been necessary to go back to original and microfilm versions of the newspaper for the text of its coverage of the debates. In many instances this material has been less legible than photocopies taken directly from the Library's clippings from the newspaper. There is, therefore, a greater possibility of textual error for the reconstitution of the 1874 debates than for the reconstitution of the debates of earlier years.