

April 10, 1871

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 10, 1871

The **SPEAKER** took the chair at 1 o'clock.

---

*Prayers*

---

### AFTER ROUTINE

#### NORTHERN RAILWAY

An Act to authorize the Northern Railway Company of Canada to make agreements for the leasing, using and working of the lines of railway of other Companies (as amended by Standing Committee on Railways, Canals and Telegraph Lines), was read a second and third time and passed.

\* \* \*

#### THE MEMBER FOR PROVENCHER

**Mr. ROSS (Prince Edward)** said before proceeding any further with the public business, he wished to draw attention to the fact that it was reported publicly that the member for Provencher had been a member of Riel's Government, and, if so, the hon. member was guilty of high treason. It was also said that the hon. member had been a member of the Court-martial which had condemned Scott, and if so, the hon. member was guilty of murder. He (Mr. Ross) thought it was due to that hon. gentleman himself and to the House, that he should set himself right. It was much better to take this step now than to leave the matter unsettled, for there was a good deal said through the country about it. There was a feeling among the people that any one connected with such an atrocious murder should be brought to justice. He (Mr. Ross) had heard that Riel was frequently in Manitoba, and he did not understand, if it were so, why the Local Government had not arrested him.

**Mr. DELORME (Provencher)** said the rumours were false. He knew nothing about the murder till two days after it was committed. (*Cheers.*) He had nothing to do with Riel's Council. When Mr. Smith was sent as a Commissioner by the Canadian Government to Manitoba, he (Mr. Delorme) was a delegate at the convention. (*Cheers.*)

**Mr. SMITH (Selkirk)** said it would be in the recollection of most of the members of this House that a certain party in Red River got up a Council last winter, which was called the Provisional Government. That was composed of Mr. Riel and several French members. With that Council, he was well aware, the hon. member had nothing to do. (*Cheers.*)

He also referred to the events connected with his mission to the people of the North West. He agreed to the public meeting which was held on the 18th and 19th of January. Members were freely elected to that convention by both sides. The Convention met in February and were occupied in discussing the so-called Bill of Rights. That discussion was as free and unrestrained as any discussion in the House up to a certain point. The hon. member for Provencher was a member of the Convention. Then, and not until then, had the hon. gentleman anything to do with the disturbances or insurrection at Red River. (*Hear, hear.*) He never heard anything mooted against Mr. Delorme until the other day, and certainly had he believed there was any foundation for the charge, he (Mr. Smith) would not only have hesitated, but actually refused to have been in anywise instrumental in introducing the hon. member before this House, as he had done. He would have regarded it as unbecoming his position as a member of this House, and still more as an insult to his honour if he thought the hon. member had been in any way connected with the so-called court martial. (*Hear, hear.*)

As to who constituted that court martial he did not know, but this he could gainsay, that Mr. Delorme was one of those people who arrogated to themselves the power to sit in judgment on a British subject and condemn him to death. There was a further convention and delegation which was sometimes called the House of Assembly of Red River. To that, he believed, the hon. gentleman had also been elected, but, elected by his parish. He (Mr. Smith) took some little part in bringing that Assembly together. A great deal had been said about that—a great deal erroneously. What was done at that time was this: There was at that time a gentleman from Canada condemned to death. Intercession had been made for him by several parties, but without avail. At a later hour in the evening he (Mr. Smith) visited those who were then in power and it was given him to understand that they were absolutely in favour of the union with Canada, and merely desired to have the people of Red River come to an understanding exactly on what terms and conditions they were to enter the Confederation. He assented, so far as his assent was necessary, on behalf of Canada to this Council being called, and further said he would go amongst the people and induce them to take part in this Council or Convention, but absolutely and only with the view of making arrangements for a union with Canada.

Of that Convention the hon. member for Provencher was also a member. He believed that having said so, he had said all that was necessary on the subject. There was in the first instance a Council called the Provisional Government—the member for Provencher had nothing to do with that. In the Convention of which the hon. gentleman was subsequently a member, there were several gentlemen who took part in it, not simply because they happened to be present, but they actually took a more active part in bringing matters forward than the French speaking members, and there could