

## Foreword

This volume, the sixth in the series to reconstruct the Debates of the House of Commons, contains the record of debate for the first of two sessions. With the publication of this volume, the Library of Parliament is well on its way to completing the important task of reconstituting from newspaper accounts the early debates of the House, for the period of 1867 to the year 1874, with official reports beginning in 1875.

Canada's Second Parliament opened on March 5, 1873 with Sir John A. Macdonald still at the helm. The First Session of this Parliament lasted only three months, adjourning on May 23 and resulting in an abrupt and dramatic prorogation on August 13, 1873. Debates were often acrimonious and focused on what became known as The Pacific Scandal, which related to accusations of government irregularities in granting the charter. The issue eventually became so contentious that a Royal Commission was struck to conduct a formal inquiry into the transactions, the outcome of which would be the subject of debate during the entire, short, Second Session.

Despite the tone of debate throughout this First Session, many important issues were discussed and key legislation passed, continuing the nation building begun in 1867. Chief among these were the New Brunswick school law question, legislation to end dual representation, and issues arising from the treaty of Washington, as Canada forged its own identity vis-à-vis the Imperial government, and our neighbour to the south. Other themes were the protection of citizens: seamen facing the dangers of water transportation and Canada's indigenous population facing pressure from the movement of settlement westward. And a new province, Prince Edward Island, was admitted to Confederation.

The project of reconstituting these early Debates was conceived as a Centennial project in the 1960s with the support of a former Speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable Roland Michener. We are indebted to Parliamentary Librarian, Sonia L'Heureux, and her predecessors who, together with their staff, continue to ensure that a gap in Canadian history is being filled with the completion and publication of each further volume, and with the broad access made possible by their release online.

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