

the press and have been partly reproduced from the Journals in these reconstituted Debates. An appendix to the Journals delivered the full report of the commission of inquiry, another 227 pages, not included here.

Unique also was the ensuing debate on the Speech from the Throne, which would never come to a proper end. From 27 October to 4 November the House was almost entirely concentrated on the issue of the Pacific Scandal, under the guise of its debate on the Throne Speech. Tupper, Hincks and Tilley stoutly defended the actions of the government, as did James McDonald of Pictou, who had served on the select committee. The Prime Minister delivered a five-hour address on 3 November, one of the great speeches of his career, in which he defended himself against the accusation that “he was a cross between Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot”. But the opposition was relentless and drew support from members, even friends of the government, in all corners of the House. Mackenzie, moving a vote of censure, spoke for three hours, followed by Huntington, Cartwright, Mills and the redoubtable Edward Blake. Most of the Prince Edward Island members declined to support the government, together with other representatives of Maritime ridings. The government held on to members from the Western provinces except for the influential Donald A. Smith of Selkirk, Manitoba. Smith delivered what was probably the *coup de grâce* to the ministry when he concluded: “he did not believe there was any intention to give the charter to Sir Hugh Allan as a consideration for his money; but on the other hand, to take money from an expectant contractor was a very grave impropriety”. Smith’s judgment, coming after many waverings and defections, represented the last straw for the government. On the following day, 5 November, Macdonald and his ministry resigned.

Alexander Mackenzie and 13 supporters were sworn in to form a new Liberal-Reform administration two days later. In accordance with the statute of the day regarding the independence of Parliament, they had accepted an office of emolument under the Crown and their seats at once became vacant until their return in by-elections. The new government, thus robbed in the House of its leading figures, had to stall for time and asked Lord Dufferin for a prorogation.

When Mr. Holton, who was not a member of the new cabinet, spoke for the Mackenzie government on 7 November in the House of Commons in response to Opposition leader Macdonald, the debate dissolved into procedural wrangling over House’s order for the arrest and detention a few days previous of an Ottawa alderman and Conservative supporter who had been accused by the then Liberal opposition of attempting to bribe one of its members to vote with the former government in the Throne Speech debacle. The point was academic, whether the imprisoned Alderman Heney should be released at once by the House to spare his reputation, or automatically upon the impending termination of the session by prorogation. Debate was cut short by the expected arrival of the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod with his summons. The Second Session of the Second Parliament was duly prorogued, to await the result of by-elections.

The End of the Second Parliament from 7 November 1873 to 2 January 1874

What happened next is seldom told but was of considerable significance in the history of the Canadian Parliament. While Macdonald had lost support in the Commons to the point where his government was forced to resign during the debate on its own Throne Speech, the wily politician