

did come onside as minister of marine and fisheries, but otherwise Mackenzie was obliged to fall back on lesser Liberals from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick to provide Maritime representation in his administration.

The strength of the cabinet, however, lay in Quebec and Ontario, notably in the persons of Québec Rouge leader Antoine-Aimé Dorion of Napierville, twice premier of the old Province of the United Canadas, and Richard Cartwright of Kingston, a former supporter of Macdonald's. Dorion was appointed minister of justice and Cartwright was given the finance portfolio. Mackenzie, Cartwright and Dorion were the chief spokesmen for the government in the new Parliament. Dorion remained at Mackenzie's side during the session of 1874 but reluctantly resigned, to become chief justice of Quebec and shore up a weak provincial bench, on 31 May 1874.

If the Liberal cabinet was not outstanding, the Conservative opposition benches were not filled with talent either. Macdonald brooded, unable to give up his post as leader because of the determination of his followers that he stay on and rehabilitate the party. His interventions in debate in 1874 were scattered and usually of brief duration. His trusted Quebec lieutenant, Sir George-Étienne Cartier, had been dead for almost a year and Cartier's successor, Hector-Louis Langevin, had been defeated in the recent general election. Sir Francis Hincks was not in the new Parliament and Macdonald's former finance minister, Leonard Tilley, had given up his seat to become lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick. John Carling had been defeated in London, the Hon. James McDonald in Pictou and the brothers Gibbs, T.N. and W.H., had lost their seats in Ontario.

Only the redoubtable Dr. Charles Tupper, premier of Nova Scotia until Confederation and still the member of Parliament from Cumberland, was left as a familiar figure on the opposition benches. But Tupper was a mighty host, an army all by himself. In addition to acting as the Conservatives' chief budget critic, Tupper was heard on almost every important issue that came before Parliament during the 1874 session. On the government's revised plans for the Pacific railway, for instance, Mackenzie and Tupper engaged in a long and biting dialogue that dominated the debate.

A session of reforms

One hundred and seventeen pieces of legislation were introduced and piloted through the First Session of the Third Parliament. True to their campaign pledges, the Liberals placed emphasis on the reform of the electoral process, something they saw as essential for the establishment of a working democracy in British North America. In their eyes, Macdonald and his colleagues had cynically manipulated elections for their own benefit; their tactics should now be ruled beyond the pale for the future.

The first step in this process had been achieved the year before through the abolition of dual representation in provincial legislatures and the House of Commons (36 Vict., Cap. 2, 1873). This act went into effect with the dissolution of the Second Parliament on 2 January 1874. Thus there were no members of the Third Parliament who also sat in local legislatures. During the first session of 1873 there had also been passed a new controverted elections act, under which judges, rather than committees of members, reviewed petitions arising from disputed elections (36 Vict, Cap.28, 1873). An expanded version of this measure was passed the next year in the 1874 session (37 Vict., Cap. 10.) The stage was therefore set for a major revision of Canada's electoral law in the session of 1874.