

session. Yet Cotton did not receive the contract for the official reporting of the debates when it was awarded in 1875. Although the *Times* had changed sides when the Mackenzie administration came to power, the new government justifiably harboured suspicions towards it. The *Times*, whose prospects had been dimmed by the failure to secure the Hansard contract, ceased publication in 1877. Its reports nicely complement those of the *Globe* in providing a reasonably full account of the early discussions in the House of Commons.

The “Scrapbook Debates” also contained occasional shorter extracts from other papers, principally the *Toronto Mail*. Montreal’s English-language newspapers, such as the *Gazette*, also covered the debates, although not on such a regular basis as the *Globe* or the *Times*. French-language newspapers largely ignored the parliamentary proceedings in Ottawa, although they sometimes reported the speech of a local member. (The fact that almost all the Commons debates in the early years after Confederation were conducted in English clearly contributed to the lack of interest in Quebec.) Maritime newspapers in Halifax or St. John showed the same lack of interest in the debates in Ottawa.

The first editor of the reconstituted House of Commons Debates was Professor P. B. Waite of Dalhousie University, whose work on the press and Confederation has become the standard source on the subject. He assembled volumes of the reconstituted debates for the first three sessions of the First Parliament (1867-1868, 1869, 1870). In his introduction to the first volume he laid down editorial guidelines that have been followed by subsequent editors in reporting the First Parliament’s fourth (1871) and fifth (1872) sessions, and now the two sessions of the Second Parliament of 1873. The most important of Professor Waite’s guidelines is the rule that editorial interventions into the text should be kept to a minimum. Spellings are corrected, whether in members’ names or geographical terms. Occasionally words that are clearly wrong, in the context of a passage, are replaced. Generally the longer version of a speech has been preferred on the grounds that it is probably closer to what was actually said in the House. Sometimes a speech has been reconstructed from two reports where this had made possible a clear and understandable text.

But however convincing the text of these reconstituted Debates may appear, it should be noted that it is not a verbatim account. Material was undoubtedly lost as speakers laboured their points well into the night and reporters’ minds wandered. This being said, the reconstituted House of Commons Debates for the two sessions of 1873, presented here in separate volumes, is probably the most balanced and objective account that can be put together of what was actually said in the House during that very partisan year.¹

Second Parliament, First Session from 5 March 1873 to 13 August 1873

The First Parliament of Canada had sat from 1867 to 1872. During this period the House of Commons grew from its original 181 members to 191 by the addition of Manitoba (1870) and

¹ For a fuller account of the editorial methods used in the reconstituted Debates project see the Introduction to the 1872 session of the House of Commons Debates. The background to the Debates project, together with a discussion of the Commons’ failure to authorize an official report of its deliberations, is found in David Farr, “Reconstituting the Early Debates of the Parliament of Canada”, *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 15 (Spring, 1992), pp. 26-32.