

Macdonald had served in the House of Commons for 24 years, 19 of those as prime minister. Through his initiatives, British North America had become a confederation of seven provinces and a Northwest Territory, which would soon yield two more. A track of steel and a telegraph line linked the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The population of Canada had blossomed from 3.5 million in 1867 to 5 million at the time of his death.

During an 1884 Conservative rally to celebrate his fortieth year as a politician, Macdonald had said, "When I look back through my forty years of public life; when I remember how few remain of those who with me entered full of hope, life and the earnestness of youth; when I bear in mind that those who do remain are like myself, feeble old men . . ."

Just then, someone cried out, "No! No! You'll never die, John A."

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE



THE FIRST ATTEMPT in the House of Commons at conferring the right to vote upon women had been made by Sir John A. Macdonald. "A majority of this House are opposed to female suffrage," Macdonald acknowledged when he introduced his Franchise Bill in 1885. "I had hoped that Canada would have the honour of first placing woman in the position that she is certain, eventually, after centuries of oppression, to obtain. It is merely a question of time all over the civilized world." But before it became law, the prime minister's Franchise Bill was amended to exclude women's suffrage.

The second attempt was made during Sir Mackenzie Bowell's short tenure as prime minister. Bowell was 70 years old when he took office in 1894, an emergency and compromise choice of a Conservative caucus staggered by the deaths of two of its leaders in four years. With the Manitoba School Question threatening the unity of his Conservative caucus, Bowell was undoubtedly none too pleased when, on May 8, 1895, his own backbencher, Nicholas Flood Davin, stood up in the chamber to table a women's suffrage resolution.

Davin was an Irish-born Canadian who had made his home

in the Northwest Territory. The 52-year-old bachelor moved "that in the opinion of the House, the privilege of voting for candidates for membership thereof should be extended to women possessing the qualifications which now entitle men to the electoral franchise." The proposal would not allow women to be candidates, but simply to vote.

► **NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN** (Assiniboia West): Mr. Speaker, look at what women have done in politics. We need not go beyond our own gracious Queen. If they can discharge the highest of political duties, how can they be unfit to discharge one of the smallest duties they can be asked to discharge in the political sphere, namely, to say for whom they may vote to be a member of Parliament.

The enfranchisement of women would elevate the tone of politics. Women are quicker in their perceptions than men. To include them among the electorate would quicken the intelligence and perceptiveness of the constituency. If the House shall sanction this proposition, and so justify me in bringing in the bill that shall translate it into law, I believe this Parliament will take a wise step.

JAMES MCMULLEN (Wellington North): I would not be at all surprised to find, in the mover of such a motion, a member who had shown his great appreciation of the fair sex by proposing to one of them and linking his fortunes with her. But to find a confirmed bachelor propose such a motion is, I confess, a surprise.

I think, Sir, that it will take away from the real charm and womanliness of women if they were given the franchise and allowed to mix in politics. I can imagine that I might go home some evening and find, instead of my being expected, with tea on the table, nothing was done, because the absorbing question of the hour was politics. I might find a very nice-looking politician sitting in the parlour soliciting a vote. I am afraid that a good many married men might get tired of the situation.

But seriously, if the franchise were given to women, the question would not stop there. The next thing would be that women would wish to be candidates for Parliament, and some of us would be left out in the cold. I am hardly prepared to vote for that.

SEVERIN LACHAPPELLE (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, to allow women to vote is, without any necessity, to impose on them a new obligation,

