



5.14: *The Chamber on Front Street, 1892*

A rare photograph shows the Ontario Parliament in session at the Front Street legislative buildings where debates raged over the new parliament, among other lively topics. Sir Oliver Mowat, the decade's most important provincial politician, appears to be absent — he should be seated on the left-hand, Government side — although a number of ghostly figures drifted indistinctly across the open lens. Taken shortly before the move to Queen's Park, this view looks eastward toward the exquisitely carved Speaker's Chair, and the elaborate wrought-iron Press Gallery, where such ink-stained wretches as *Grip* cartoonist J. W. Bengough observed provincial politics from on high. (Our images of Sir John A. Macdonald and Premier Mowat come as much from Bengough's pen as any photographer's camera.) Ranks of bewildered Parliamentarians sit among young messengers, half-filled wastepaper baskets, heating vents, singular clock, scuffed desks, elaborately upholstered chairs set against the far wall, and the Provincial Mace placed on the Clerk's Table, facing toward the camera (indicating that the House was in session). Some of the desks occupied by the likes of Mackenzie, Baldwin, and Blake, the clerk's table, and the 1867 mace, are now at Queen's Park.

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