

Edgar McInnis

CANADA

**A Political &
Social History**

With a final chapter by Michiel Horn

CANADA

A Political & Social History

FOURTH EDITION

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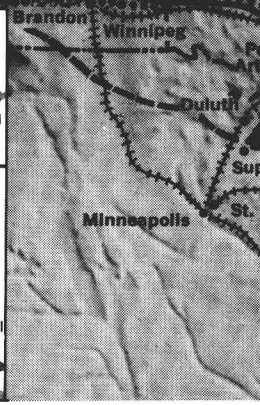
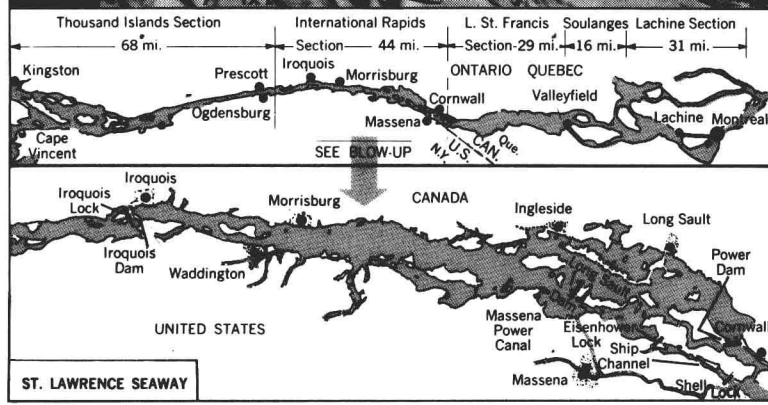
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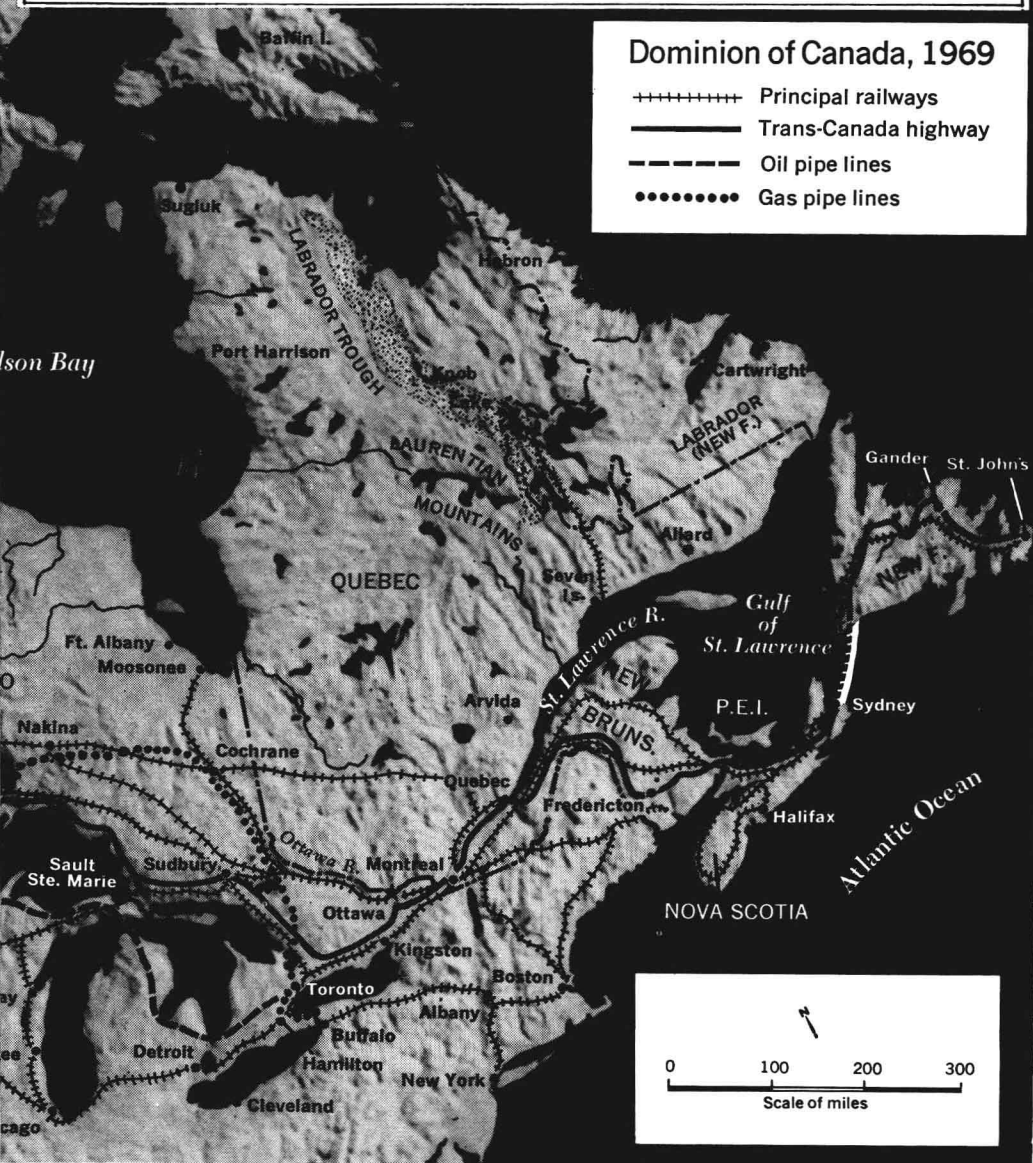
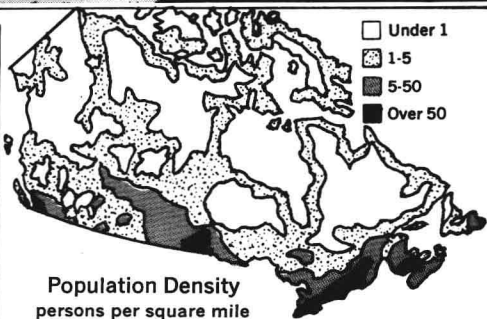
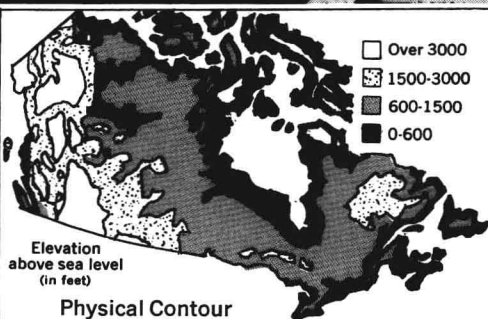
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CANADA

A Political & Social History

To Charles Herbert Best





PREFACE

The history of Canada is a study in political survival. The task of creating a distinctive society has been achieved in the face of numerous and conflicting stresses, both internal and external. Interacting factors of economics and politics and geography, of traditions and aspirations, of national unity and sectional diversity, form the complex pattern that has shaped the present Dominion. Throughout the whole story runs the constant effort to reconcile the divergent strains inherent in Canada's position and structure and to harmonize the varied and often clashing forces within a united and independent community.

This process has given a unique character to the Canadian achievement. Its essential drama does not lie in armed struggles in which the nation's destiny is at stake, or in political conflicts in which irreconcilable and contending forces press their quarrel to a decisive issue. It lies rather in the slow and tenacious advance from one step to another along the road to nationhood, the patient evolution of successive compromises in politics and government, the determined conquest of the physical obstacles to national economic development. In their very nature, few of Canada's crucial problems could be solved by violent methods or intransigent decisions. Patience and compromise were virtues born of necessity, for the alternative would not be the triumph of one or other contending group but disruption or extinction or both.

The recurrent nature of Canada's basic problems emphasizes both the urgent need for moderation and the striking degree to which this quality has been applied in Canadian affairs. Time and again, Canada has faced the gravest kind of dilemma in her relations with the two great English-speaking nations with whom her destiny is so inextricably bound up. Time and again, economic difficulties or racial antagonisms have threatened her internal structure with deadlock or collapse. Yet on each occasion Canadians have turned from extreme courses to seek a middle ground on

which cooperation was possible, and outside of which lay disaster. If the difficulties have never been completely removed, they have never become completely irreconcilable. It is this sound sense of the possible that has enabled Canada hitherto to surmount each successive crisis; and each one has uniformly been followed by a new period of progress in Canadian independence and Canadian unity, and by a fresh growth in economic strength and political stature.

This book seeks to present the narrative of Canada's rise to nationhood and its evolution in the century following Confederation in terms of the basic determinants. I have taken advantage of the preparation of a new edition to amplify or modify a substantial number of passages in the earlier text in the light of recent research, and to emphasize or clarify a number of points that may help to sharpen the perspective. This applies particularly to certain aspects of the structure and development of French Canada and their bearing on French-English relations—a theme whose understanding is so essential as a background to current issues. The more significant among such issues are surveyed in a final chapter which carries the story to the federal election of June 1968.

Among those whose contributions have been especially helpful in the preparation of this edition, I would particularly thank Peter B. Waite for his suggestions based on his research for the forthcoming volume in the Centennial series covering the period 1874-1896. I extend my appreciation to the numerous individuals in public bodies and government departments who were so helpful in providing the illustrations. The staff of the Public Archives has, as always, been prompt and cooperative in responding to requests. My very special gratitude is due to Nick Balla and Ron Dick of the National Film Board, who made available a generous selection of prints from the Board's extensive archives, thus providing resources which under present circumstances I could hardly have hoped to duplicate by my own efforts.

Toronto July, 1968

Edgar McInnis

Preface to the Fourth Edition

Edgar McNnis was a marvelous man. His gruff voice and reserved manner did not bother those who had learned to appreciate his intelligence and wit. His speech was slow-paced and deliberate, punctuated with puffs on his pipe, but it was always to the point and touched with a wry sense of humor. He had few close friends but many admirers.

His death in 1973 was a shock, particularly to those of us in the History Department of Glendon College, York University, with whom he spent time after his retirement in 1968. For several years he kept an office in the college and spoke willingly with any student or member of faculty who knocked on his door. He was the model of an academic elder statesman. In his retirement he had the title of University Orator. I can think of no person better qualified to act in such a capacity.

One clause in his will directed that the remaining royalties from his books be paid into the Principal's Trust Account for Glendon College. When the third edition of *Canada: A Political and Social History* went out of print, therefore, the matter was of concern both to the publishers and to the college. McNnis's work had held up well and the publishers were convinced that there would be a continuing demand for the book if it could be revised or updated. They approached me, among others, with a proposal to write a chapter on the years since 1968 that could be added to the existing text, and David McQueen, principal of Glendon College from 1975 to 1980, urged me to consider it seriously. As associate principal from 1978 to 1981, I shared his concern for the financial health of the trust account, but I think I would nevertheless have refused had I not known Edgar McNnis. I had done some research for him in 1966; he was chairman of the department that offered me a full-time appointment from 1968; and my research on the League for Social Reconstruction had given me the opportunity for some enjoyable conversations with him about his associates in the League and the group's early years. That I was in the mid-1970s chairman of what was once his department served as another sentimental link. I accepted the assignment.

In carrying it out I have tried to observe McNinnis's own approach to the history of Canada. There is more economic and political history here, and less social history as currently practised, than might have been the case had I not been adding a chapter to a book that is still very much McNinnis's. The format I have used is also very similar to his.

Anyone who writes about the very recent Canadian past is bound to owe a great deal to Jack Saywell and his associates on the *Canadian Annual Review*. I gladly acknowledge my debt to them. I want to thank David Wolfe, who gave me a copy of the paper he read to the Canadian Political Science Association in May 1981, "The demise of the Keynesian era in Canada: dilemmas of federal economic policy, 1975-1980." I found it very useful, not least for its many tables of data. Gail Brandt and David McQueen undertook to read and criticize what I wrote, the former for its historical and the latter for its economic accuracy. I am grateful to them both.

Ian Radforth revised the original bibliography, though the responsibility for the final selection—as for chapter 23—rests on my shoulders. Lack of space prevented the inclusion of many valuable works. The same reason, and the awareness that this book will be used primarily in English Canada, led me to exclude books by French Canadian scholars unless they had been translated into English.

In his preface to the third edition, McNinnis wrote of the "sound sense of the possible" that had enabled Canada "to surmount each successive crisis" in domestic as well as external affairs. At the time of writing, Canada is in crisis once more. The patriation of the British North America Act without the consent of Quebec has lent new strength to the separatist movement in that province. Some western Canadians warn that "if Quebec goes, the West will go"; a few threaten that the West may secede first. The Canadian economy, with regional exceptions, is more troubled than at any time since the Depression of the 1930s. Our relations with the United States seem to be approaching an equivalently low point.

In 1968 Edgar McNinnis was optimistic about the future of Canada. I hope that in the long run his optimism was justified, but I know the immediate future will be filled with domestic and international uncertainty. At such times a work of history serves, if not as a guide to the future, then at least as a way of making the past lucid. I believe that Edgar McNinnis's *Canada* will continue to serve that very important purpose.

Toronto, January 1982

Michiel Horn

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