

Your student council has one. Every community service group has one. Every province in Canada and every nation in the world has one. A constitution is an essential part of every political organization. A constitution is the code of rules that outlines the structures and procedures of a political organization. A state constitution is the constitution of a country.

There are two main types of state constitutions. A **formal constitution** is a legal document. Most countries today have formal constitutions. Over seventy-five per cent of state constitutions have been written since 1945 by countries that won their independence after the Second World War.

A second type of constitution is an **informal constitution**. It is not a written document. Rather, it is the body of laws, precedents, and customs that form a country's political tradition. Because everyone knows and accepts the way the government should work, a formal constitution is considered unnecessary and sometimes undesirable. Informal constitutions are quite rare today. They were more common in the past when most countries were ruled by monarchs.

State constitutions are based on many factors including a country's history, a perception of human needs, a belief in a particular form of government, and a political philosophy. Consequently, a country's constitution tells us a great deal about a country. This chapter will explore the roles and the limitations of constitutions by looking at examples of state constitutions that are informal, formal, and a combination of the two.

Functions of a Constitution

No matter what language or format they use, all state constitutions perform three basic functions. First, they state the principles and goals of their society. This part of a constitution is based directly on the political philosophy of the constitution's authors, usually the government of the day.

In 1983, leaders from several Native bands protested outside the Ontario legislature to bring attention to the importance of protecting aboriginal rights in the constitution.



Second, all state constitutions outline the structure of government. Constitutions define the main bodies of government, their relationship to each other, the particular duties of each, and the process used to make laws. They also outline the limits to the power of government.

Third, constitutions describe the relationship of citizens to the state and the government. This relationship is often described by listing citizens' rights. The list protects citizens from illegal actions by the government.

We can easily see these three functions in formal constitutions. They are less apparent, however, in informal constitutions. It is necessary to study a country's laws, government, and history to see how an informal constitution reflects the society.

Effectiveness of a Constitution

A war or revolution may make a constitution irrelevant. Beyond such drastic events, a constitution's ability to fulfill its functions can be affected in many ways.

Most constitutions, for example, allow certain members or branches of government to take or be given additional powers to deal with national emergencies. In Canada, if Parliament perceives a national emergency, it may invoke the War Measures Act. This seldom-used act temporarily suspends all civil rights and gives almost dictatorial power to the prime minister. It was used in the two world wars and in response to the FLQ crisis in 1970. In other countries, this power is called martial law. Some governments exploit emergency powers and thereby discredit their constitutions. The government of Taiwan, for example, declared martial law in 1949 and did not end it until 1987.

Many constitutions have contradictions within them. The contradictions allow the government to ignore whole sections of their constitutions. For example, in many communist countries, including Bulgaria and Cuba, citizens' rights are included in formal constitutions. But other parts of the constitutions state that citizens' rights must never clash with the interests of the state or the ruling political party. Consequently, the constitutions protect the right of people to criticize the government publicly but allow the government to arrest people if they do.

A constitution, of course, cannot fulfill its functions if a government ignores or suspends it. In Poland, for example, in 1978, workers formed a trade union called Solidarity to fight for better pay, improved work conditions, and more rights. The Polish constitution allows for the existence of independent trade unions. By 1980, Solidarity had grown very strong and had begun to speak for nearly all Poles. In response, the government suspended the constitution and then banned Solidarity. The constitution was robbed of its ability to protect the citizens or restrict the actions of the government.

Finally, a constitution cannot be effective if people have no faith in its power to protect their rights or limit government actions. If a constitution is often suspended or if emergency powers are exploited, people will no longer believe it is useful. People will also lose faith if every new government brings in a new constitution. For example, in 1987, the twenty-year dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines ended. A democratic government under Corazon Aquino was elected. One of her first acts was to write a new constitution. Despite their happiness with the change, many citizens do not trust a document that they believe may change again. Many people ignore the constitution and do not expect it to protect their rights or restrict government power. Political scientists wonder how effective a constitution can

be if the courts, police, armed forces, and government officials share that scepticism.

Factors that reduce a constitution's power affect both formal and informal constitutions. However, since informal constitutions draw their power from tradition and popular ways of thinking, they are less vulnerable to these factors than formal constitutions. Some formal constitutions, after all, are written with little regard to tradition or custom. Such constitutions seldom fulfill the three functions of a constitution. Examining how constitutions work in practice

helps us understand how formal and informal constitutions address the three functions.

The Informal Constitution of Great Britain

Great Britain's political philosophy and system of government have evolved slowly over 800 years. Its political traditions are so widely accepted that the

Armed forces land in Montréal in October 1970 after the declaration of the War Measures Act. The act temporarily suspended the civil rights of all Canadian citizens.



British have seldom wanted a formal constitution. Elections, for example, are called every four to five years despite the fact that voting is not discussed in any formal constitution. Britain's informal constitution is the collection of laws, precedents, and customs that is its political tradition. This political tradition can be traced to four important events in British history.

First, the Magna Charta was signed in 1215. It stated that a system of laws should be established. It limited the power of the monarchy by demanding that even the monarch obey these laws. The rule of law meant that Britons could no longer be ruled by the whims of an all-powerful monarch.

Fifty years later, in 1256, a Gathering of Commoners convened in London. The commoners were a collection of clergy and other well-to-do men. No peasants, serfs, women, or labourers were included. The Gathering of Commoners discussed politics and made suggestions to the king. It established the idea that people have a role in government. The House of Commons and its name came from the Gathering of Commoners.

The third major event, the passage of a Bill of Rights, took place as a result of the Glorious Revolution in 1688. James II had fled to France, leaving no monarch on the throne. The Bill of Rights re-established the monarchy under William and Mary but with new restrictions. Although the monarchs continued to control foreign affairs, they could not set new taxes. They were completely dependent on Parliament for revenue. The Bill of Rights ensured that absolute monarchy had ended in Great Britain. The country moved away from the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes.

The fourth important event that shaped British political tradition was the passage of election reform bills. Each bill moved Great Britain closer to universal suffrage. Universal suffrage means that all citizens over a certain age can vote. The Reform Bill of 1832 reduced the amount of property a person needed to vote. The Reform Bills



Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst is arrested outside Buckingham Palace while trying to present a petition to King George V in May 1914. Universal suffrage is protected in many nations' constitutions as an important civil right.

of 1867 and 1884 further reduced the property qualification. The Reform Bill of 1918 gave suffrage to all men over the age of twenty-one, most women over thirty, and eliminated the property qualification altogether. Finally, the Reform Bill of 1928 gave the right to vote to all women over twenty-one.

The ideas of the Magna Charta and the Gathering of Commoners helped establish Britain's political philosophy. The Bill of Rights and the Reform Bills established the structures of government and the relationship of citizens to the government and the state. The three functions of a constitution were fulfilled without a written constitution. This is the essence of an informal constitution.

Governing with an Informal Constitution

Great Britain's political system has changed very little since 1688. Its legislative branch, Parliament, consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Members are elected to the House of Commons and appointed to the House of Lords. Although the House of Lords has had little political power since 1911, a bill must still pass through both houses to become law.

The executive consists of the prime minister and the cabinet. The prime minister is the head of government. The legislative and executive branches are not formally separated. The political party that elects the most members to the House of Commons becomes the government. Its leader becomes the prime minister and the head of the government. All members of the executive are part of the legislature and participate directly in the legislative process.

The judiciary is the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom. It decides if laws follow the precedents of existing laws and political custom.

The head of state is the monarch. The monarch has the right to inform the prime minister of perceived dangers in his or her policies and to be informed by the prime minister of upcoming bills and policies. The monarch must sign bills before they become laws. The monarchy is a hereditary position.

Various factors restrict the government's power and actions including existing laws, the judiciary, the monarch, and the loyal opposition. The opposition is made up of Members of Parliament from political parties other than the government party. In many countries, parties that publicly oppose the government are banned and their members arrested. British political tradition recognizes that the opposition is loyal to the political ideals of the country and to the Crown. Members of the opposition sit in the House of Commons. The loyal opposition is expected to

criticize the government and ensure that it is responsible to the people.

Some British people are uneasy because their rights are not written down. They worry that an irresponsible or unethical government could ignore the restrictions of the opposition and judiciary and rob citizens of long-established rights. Others, however, claim that rights are better protected by political tradition than by an easily changed formal constitution. Why, they say, argue with success?

The Formal Constitution of the United States

The United States is the product of a violent, seven-year revolution that formally ended in 1783. Representatives from the thirteen colonies gathered in 1781 to create a formal constitution, which they called the Articles of Confederation. The constitution did not create a central government with enough strength to handle national affairs. After only four years, the new country was bankrupt and on the brink of another revolution. State representatives met in Philadelphia in 1787. They originally planned to amend the Articles of Confederation but decided to discard it and start over. In a hot, fly-infested room that reeked from

Fig. 4.1 Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America.

the smell of nearby stables, the delegates created the current American constitution.

On the original document, the words “we the people” are much larger than the other words. They illustrate that the new political system would be, as President Abraham Lincoln later said, by the people, for the people, and of the people. The authors, however, were products of their times. Not all people were included. The constitution allowed slavery to continue and did not allow full citizenship for women. The vote had a property qualification. The preamble expresses Locke’s political philosophy on which the constitution is based.

The American constitution contains seven articles. The first four fulfill the second function of constitutions by describing the structure and power of government. Article one states that the legislative branch of government is the Congress. The Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. This article clearly outlines the qualifications for prospective Members of Congress and the procedures by which they are elected. It also describes congressional power and responsibilities. Bills, for instance, must be approved by a majority in both houses to become laws. Its most important power is its exclusive right to tax, and to print, borrow, and spend money.

This famous Junius Brutus Stearns painting shows the climatic moment when constitutional chairperson George Washington offered the final draft of the new American constitution for delegates’ approval in Philadelphia in 1787.



Article two describes the executive. The executive is the president. It explains how the president is elected and defines presidential powers. The United States is unusual because the president is both the head of state and the head of government. Consequently, the office of president is very powerful.

The third article assigns judicial power to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court interprets the constitution in order to arbitrate disputes between states or between a state and the federal government. Article three also describes the different federal and state courts and outlines their powers.

The authors of the constitution wanted to ensure that no one could abuse political power. They created a system of overlapping powers called **checks and balances**. Each branch of government checks the others to ensure that the letter and spirit of the constitution is obeyed. Each branch of government also balances the power of the others. For example, the president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. But only Congress can declare war or raise money to support the armed forces. The president can veto a law passed by Congress. The Supreme Court can rule that a law passed by Congress and signed by the president contradicts the constitution and can disallow it.

Amendments

Article five describes the amending formula. An **amending formula** is a procedure for changing existing clauses or for adding new clauses to a formal constitution. Most writers of constitutions include an amending formula because they realize that they cannot anticipate future events or needs. Amending a constitution is serious because the changes must reflect the political philosophy of the constitution. To ensure that amendments are considered long and seriously, amending formulas are usually quite complicated. To change the

American constitution, the president, the Congress, and at least three-quarters of the state governments must approve the amendment. The process can take years to complete.

There have been twenty-six amendments to the constitution. The first ten were ratified or agreed to in 1791. Together, they form what is commonly called the American Bill of Rights. These amendments give American citizens the rights of free speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. Some amendments describe rights when arrested. For example, the fifth amendment allows people to refuse to answer questions in court if they believe their answers may incriminate them. These ten amendments fulfill the third function of a constitution.

The twenty-six amendments to the American constitution show how a formal constitution can reveal a country's history and progress. The thirteenth and fifteenth amendments, for example, end slavery and allow all men to vote, including former slaves. The sixteenth amendment allows women to vote.

In 1974, an amendment to end sex discrimination was proposed. It was called the Equal Rights Amendment. Despite the efforts of women's groups, the amendment was not ratified by enough state governments to become a part of the constitution. The ERA struggle shows that amendments to formal constitutions reflect social change. They can also indicate that the time for such change has not yet arrived.

The Canadian Constitution

The Canadian constitution has been shaped by both the British and American examples. It is similar to the American formal constitution because it is written. It clearly states the political philosophy, the structure of government, and the

rights of Canadian citizenship. It is similar to the British informal constitution because much of Canada's political system is based on tradition and is not written in the constitution.

The constitution reflects Canada's history and cultural heritage. Canada's first permanent European settlers were French with French political traditions. British colonists in the Maritimes established British traditions. The United Empire Loyalists who fled to Canada from the United States during and after the American Revolution reinforced the British traditions.

In 1864, representatives from Britain's North American colonies met first in Charlottetown and then in Québec City. Under the leadership of John A. Macdonald, the representatives from East and West Canada (Québec and Ontario), Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick arrived at a deal for union. The deal became known as the British North America Act. It incorporated some aspects of American democracy while remaining loyal to British and French political traditions. The BNA Act came into effect on 1 July 1867. It was Canada's first constitution.

The BNA Act declared the existence of a new country. It stated that the structure and philosophy of the new government would be similar to that of Great Britain while maintaining French political traditions in Québec. The structure of the government would be like Britain's parliamentary democracy. It would be a federal state like the United States.

The BNA Act stated that the executive would be composed of the monarch or the monarch's representative, the Governor General, and the Privy Council, which became known as the Cabinet. The BNA Act does not precisely define the powers of the Canadian executive. Although everyone knew that a prime minister would lead the government, the Act does not mention the prime minister directly.

Parliament was granted legislative power. It

was bicameral, meaning that it had two parts. Bills would have to be passed by both the elected House of Commons and the appointed Senate to become laws. Like the British House of Lords, the Senate was meant to be above electoral politics and made up of people from Canada's upper classes. Its purpose was to provide 'sober second thought' to bills passed by the politically motivated and emotional House of Commons.

The longest and most complex sections of the BNA Act deal with the separation of powers between the provincial and the federal governments. The Fathers of Confederation believed that the strength of American state governments had led to the American civil war. They decided to create a country with a strong central government. The constitution gave provincial governments a great deal of power but it also restricted their power in three important ways. **Residual power**, jurisdiction over any matters not directly addressed in the constitution, was given to the federal government. A representative of the Queen, the lieutenant-governor, would oversee all provincial government activities. The federal government would appoint and pay the lieutenant-governors. The constitution also allowed the federal government to disallow any provincial law that it decided was not in the national interest.

Sections 91, 92, and 93 outline specific federal and provincial powers. Section 91 lists the powers assigned to the federal government, including the maintenance of peace, order, and good government. The statement is vague, but it has been interpreted to allow wide-ranging power. This phrase, for example, makes the War Measures Act constitutional.

Sections 92 and 93 list provincial powers, including control of education. As a result, your provincial government designed the course you are taking and approved this book. In many areas, such as trade and taxation, provincial and federal powers overlap. This overlap was intentional and

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Fig. 4.2 Some Responsibilities of the Federal and Provincial Governments in Canada

Federal Powers		Provincial Powers	
National defence		Natural resources	
Monetary system		Education	
Citizenship		Prisons	
Criminal law		Hospitals	
Postal service		Property	
Trade and commerce		Civil rights	
Navigation		Municipal governments	
Aboriginal affairs			
Shared Powers			
Public health		Agriculture	
Labour		Justice	
Welfare		Taxation	

was meant to provide a check and balance in these areas. It has been the source of a great deal of conflict and tension between the federal and provincial governments.

The Canada Act

The Fathers of Confederation believed that Canada would always remain a semi-independent, colonial state under the control and protection of Great Britain. Consequently, the BNA Act was an incomplete constitution. It contained no provisions for a Canadian judiciary. Until 1949, Canada relied on the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to serve that function. As well, the rights of citizenship were not defined. Because the BNA Act

was an act of the British parliament, only that body could change it. It could not be amended in Canada. The BNA Act remained filed in London with all other British laws.

Many attempts were made to **patriate** the constitution, or to bring the constitution home and place it under Canadian control. The provincial and federal governments could never agree on an amending formula or a bill of rights.

In 1980, Québec Premier René Lévesque organized a province-wide referendum. The referendum asked the people of Québec to decide if the Québec government should negotiate sovereignty-association with the federal government. Sovereignty-association is a form of separation. Québec would be politically separate but economically tied to Canada. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau promised Quebecers that if they refused sovereignty-association, he would patriate the constitution and protect Québec's rights under a new constitution. Trudeau's promise was an important factor in the referendum. Sixty per cent of Quebecers voted no to sovereignty-association. It was then up to Trudeau to keep his promise.

A final agreement was reached after a federal-provincial conference in 1981. Lévesque believed that the new constitution did not adequately protect Québec's historical rights and refused to sign it. Nonetheless, in 1982, in a rain-drenched outdoor ceremony, Queen Elizabeth signed the document and made patriation official.

The patriated constitution is called the Canada Act. Although much of it is the same as the BNA Act, there are important additions. The first is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It explicitly states all the rights that tradition has taught Canadians to expect. An important part of the Charter is the notwithstanding clause. This clause allows provincial governments to pass legislation that conflicts with the Charter. A provincial law needs only state that the law is being passed notwithstanding the

provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Chapter five discusses the Charter in more depth.

The constitution states that all treaties made with Canada's Aboriginal peoples will be respected. Native groups are not satisfied with this provision. They had expected historical and current injustices to be corrected. They wanted constitutional recognition as self-governing nations. Aboriginal rights will continue to be a controversial constitutional issue in the future.

The Canada Act contains an amending formula. The federal government and seven provinces representing at least 50 per cent of the population must agree to any amendment.

Amendments cannot be made to any section of the constitution that deals solely with areas of provincial concern. For example, the federal government cannot propose an amendment that deals with hospitals because the provinces control healthcare. Furthermore, amendments that affect the monarchy, some language rights, and the Supreme Court require unanimous consent of all the provinces.

The Canada Act is a complete constitution. It fulfills all three functions of a constitution. Because much of it is written, it is formal. Because the government structure remains partially undefined, it is informal. For example, the prime minister is still not mentioned in the Canadian constitution.



At an outdoor ceremony in Ottawa in April 1982, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau watches Queen Elizabeth II sign the patriated Canadian constitution. Ironically, the ceremony was drenched shortly afterward by a storm that blew in from Québec.

The Meech Lake Accord

The most important amendments to the constitution were agreed to by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the provincial premiers in 1987. Because the agreement was reached at a resort called Meech Lake, it is known as the Meech Lake Accord.

In the Accord, Québec is recognized as a distinct society. The Québec government is allowed to pass laws to preserve and promote its French nature. Traditionally, the prime minister has appointed people to be Supreme Court Justices and Senators. The Accord states that the prime minister must choose appointees from lists provided by the provinces. The Accord contains an opting-out clause. It allows provincial governments to refuse to participate in national programs. However, they will still receive federal funding if they implement similar programs that maintain national standards.

Québec signed the Accord and again joined the Canadian constitutional process. Those who support Meech Lake argue that it strengthens Confederation by recognizing regional differences. Opponents claim that it dangerously weakens the strength of the federal government. By 1989, some provinces that had supported the Accord began reconsidering their stand. The spirited debate illustrates the intensity of Canadians' respect for the constitution.

Summary

In January 1989, arsonists burned a building in Montréal that housed the offices of Alliance Québec. It is a group dedicated to protecting the rights of English-speaking Quebecers. Earlier that month, the Canadian Supreme Court had struck down Bill 101 as unconstitutional. Bill 101 was a Québec law that stated that only French signs were legal in Québec. Québec Premier Robert Bourassa invoked the notwithstanding clause and brought in Bill 69. It stated that only French signs could appear outside stores while other languages could be used on signs inside. The fire, public meetings, and threats of violence followed the bill's passage. These events show the degree to which constitutional matters directly affect people's lives. Constitutions are not dusty old documents to be filed in archives and forgotten.

Both formal and informal constitutions fulfill three basic functions. More than simply fulfilling functions, however, constitutions show how societies are organized. Constitutions are the clearest expression of what a country is, what it has been, and what it would most like to be.

Looking Closer

Summarize

1. Explain the difference between a formal and an informal constitution.
2. State three functions of a constitution. What are four factors that can keep a constitution from fulfilling these functions?
3. Explain the four events that form the basis of Britain's political tradition.
4. Describe the purpose of the American system of checks and balances.
5. What is the purpose of a constitutional amending formula?

6. In what ways is Canada's constitution both formal and informal?
7. Summarize the constitutional changes contained in the Meech Lake Accord.

Organize

1. Copy the following chart into your notebook and complete it.

	Great Britain	United States	Canada
Executive			
Legislative			
Judiciary			
Head of Government			
Head of State			

2. Create a comparison-analysis organizer to show how the constitutions of Great Britain, the United States, and Canada fulfill the three functions of a constitution.

Analyse

1. Examine the constitution of your student council. Does it fulfill the three functions of a constitution? Suggest ways that it can be improved.
2. Discuss ways in which a country's history and how that country achieved independence affects its constitution. Cite specific examples from the chapter.
3. The summary states that a constitution is an expression of what a country is, what it has been, and what it would like to be. Do you agree? Discuss your answer.

Spotlight: Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891)

On a bright September day in 1864, a luxurious steamship called the *Queen Victoria* glided into the Charlottetown harbour. Its arrival added to the festive spirit of the small city, which was already awash with the excitement of a visiting circus group. The ship brought representatives from the colony of Canada (Québec and Ontario). They wanted to discuss the possibility of union with representatives from the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. They wanted to make a new nation.

The leader of the Canadians was a tall, thin man with a mass of curly black hair and an unusually large nose. His name was John Alexander Macdonald. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and moved to Kingston, Ontario, as a child. By the age of twenty-one, he was a lawyer and an active member of the Tory party. Macdonald entered politics and quickly made a name for himself as a witty, intelligent debater and a careful administrator. He became popular with many people as a storyteller and practical joker.

After serving as Attorney General for Canada West (Ontario), Macdonald became leader of the Tory party. Later, he led the government of the colony of Canada. Canada was in terrible economic shape and had an unworkable political system. There were numerous political stalemates and frequent, inconclusive elections. In 1861, civil war had broken out in the United States. Macdonald feared that when the war ended the Americans might simply turn the armies north and conquer the small British colonies one at a time.

The Maritime colonies were having similar political and economic difficulties. Their problems were made worse by crippling debt. They planned to meet in Charlottetown to discuss a union of the Maritime colonies. When Macdonald heard of the meeting, he asked to be invited to propose a larger union.

Everyone was impressed with Macdonald's wit, charm, intelligence, and ability to negotiate compromises. He chaired the Charlottetown conference as well as the Québec conference that followed later. He played a major role in writing the British North America Act that joined Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick and became the new country's constitution. His convincing arguments led to the establishment of a federal political system led by a strong federal government. He led the delegation to London for

British approval of the BNA Act. On the day of Confederation, 1 July 1867, Queen Victoria knighted him and he became Sir John A. Macdonald. Few people were surprised when he led the Tories to become Canada's first prime minister.

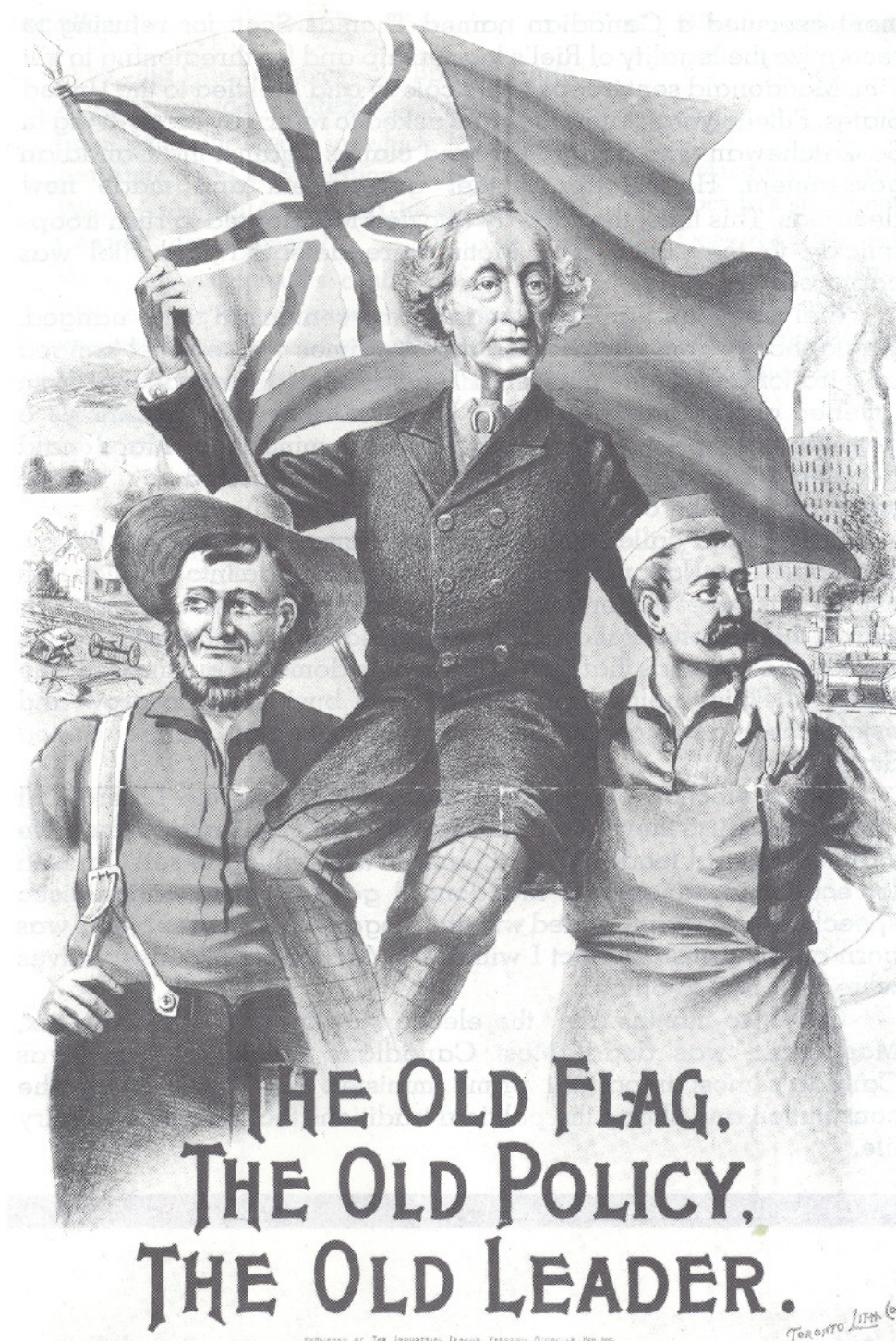
Some of Macdonald's bad habits infuriated those around him. His penchant for delaying decisions led to the nickname 'Old Tomorrow'. There were times when he drank too much. Many believed that his drinking resulted from a tragic personal life. His first wife died slowly of a long illness. His son died in infancy. His daughter was born mentally handicapped. Whatever the reasons for his drinking, everyone in Ottawa knew what was meant by the whispered suggestion, "Sir John's off again."

As prime minister, it was Macdonald's job to make the new constitution work. He was aware that his government was setting precedents and helping to establish a new Canadian political tradition. His primary goal was to expand and strengthen the new nation. Shortly after Confederation, Nova Scotia Premier Joseph Howe threatened to pull his province out of Canada. Macdonald compromised with Howe and Nova Scotia to keep the province in Confederation. Macdonald also led the negotiations that made Prince Edward Island another member of Confederation.

Macdonald's greatest achievement was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Macdonald dreamed of a country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. He knew that a railway was the only way to tie Canada's ends together physically and psychologically. He also knew that if Canada did not establish itself in the prairies, that region would be swallowed by the United States. He promised British Columbians that if they joined Canada instead of the United States he would build a railway from east to west within ten years.

The job was long and expensive. At one point, Macdonald was accused of taking bribes from railway executives. The scandal cost his government an election. As opposition leader, he watched railway construction slow to a maddening pace. His government was re-elected and the pace again quickened. Finally, in June 1886, the last spike was driven in Craigellachie, British Columbia. The railway was completed and Canada was joined from sea to sea.

Possibly the most controversial decision that Macdonald made involved Louis Riel. In 1869, Riel was the leader of the Métis in a part of southern Manitoba called the Red River colony. Riel and the Métis formed a provisional government that insisted that the Canadian government recognize Métis land rights. The provisional govern-



A Conservative party election poster from Sir John A. Macdonald's last campaign.


ment executed a Canadian named Thomas Scott for refusing to recognize the legality of Riel's leadership and for threatening to kill him. Macdonald sent troops to the colony and Riel fled to the United States. Fifteen years later, Riel was asked to return by Métis living in Saskatchewan who again had land claims against the Canadian government. He set up another government and made new demands. This time, the railway allowed Macdonald to rush troops quickly to the scene. The Métis were defeated and Riel was captured.

Riel was found guilty of treason and sentenced to be hanged. Anglophones from Ontario and the Maritimes wanted Riel hanged as a traitor and for the murder of Thomas Scott. Francophones from Québec and Manitoba wanted Macdonald to pardon him as a defender of oppressed French Catholic minorities. Macdonald decided to allow Riel to hang. Macdonald was hailed as a hero in some parts of the country and burned in effigy in others.

Macdonald called his economic program the National Policy. The goal of the National Policy was to turn Canada into a nation that traded east-west rather than north-south. Building the railway was part of the National Policy, as was the creation of high tariffs. Tariffs are taxes on imports that are meant to help domestic businesses. The National Policy helped many Canadian businesses to grow and established an economy that was independent of the United States.

In the election of 1891, Macdonald accused the Liberals of treason because they favoured free trade with the United States. He claimed Liberal leader Wilfrid Laurier was willing to sell Canada for economic advantage. Macdonald gave rousing, nationalistic speeches that always ended with the slogan, "A British subject I was born and a British subject I will die!" Macdonald's Conservatives were returned to office.

Only two months after the election, at the age of seventy-six, Macdonald was dead. Most Canadians believe that he was Canada's most important prime minister. He helped write the constitution and shape the political traditions that gave the country life.



Recall

1. Why did the colonies of British North America consider Confederation in 1864?
2. Summarize the ways in which Macdonald contributed to Confederation in 1867.
3. Why was the building of the CPR important to Canada's development?
4. What do Macdonald's conflicts with Louis Riel indicate about some of the problems involved in governing Canada?
5. What were the goals of the National Policy and how were they attained?

6. What was the main issue in the election of 1891?

Consider

1. "Macdonald gave the constitution life." What does this statement mean?
2. Does the 1989 Free Trade agreement with the United States contradict Macdonald's National Policy? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think Macdonald is Canada's most important prime minister? Explain your answer.

Case Study # 1 — Sweden

The streets of Stockholm were busy on a cold February evening in 1986. Olof Palme, the Swedish prime minister, was quietly walking home from the theatre with his wife. Suddenly, shots rang out. Palme was dead. Swedes and the world were shocked that such a violent act could happen in a country known for its non-violence.

Sweden is unique in many ways. Its political culture is to the left of Canada's. Its social system reflects the belief that Swedish citizens have certain fundamental rights. Citizens expect government to provide social programs that protect those rights. In return, they are willing to pay high taxes to finance the programs. The Swedish government supplies many services to its citizens that people in most other countries have to pay for themselves. For example, the government pays pensions to everyone over the age of 67, widows and widowers, and people with disabilities. The government pays for health care for all citizens. It allows six months maternity leave which can be shared by the parents. It supplies free lunches to all elementary school students. Tuition is free at the six universities and students are given interest-free loans for their living expenses. The government even provides interest-free loans to newly married couples to help them buy their first furniture.

Government officials credit Sweden's low rates of suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse, and divorce to their social policies. Poverty is nearly unknown in Sweden. There are no homeless people. The literacy rate is 100 per cent.

Sweden has a democratic government. It has been a constitutional monarchy since 1720. The monarch today has little political power. Parliament, called the Riksdag, holds power. The Riksdag is unicameral, which means that it has only one house. It has 349 members. It is the

legislative body of government. The Supreme Court performs the judicial function. The prime minister and the cabinet make up the executive.

Elections are held every three years on the third Sunday in September. Everyone over the age of eighteen can vote. Swedes believe that their votes are important and 90 per cent of eligible voters usually cast ballots.

Unlike Canada, Sweden has a system of **proportional representation**. People do not vote for a member in their riding. Instead, they vote for a party. Any party that receives over 4 per cent of the popular vote can have members in the Riksdag. A party's percentage of the popular vote determines how many members it will have. The party with the highest percentage of voter support forms the government and its leader becomes prime minister.

Sweden, with five major parties, has almost always had minority governments. Except for a period of coalition governments between 1976 to 1982, the Social Democratic Party has ruled since 1917.

The Swedish government is very receptive to the wishes of the people. Citizens often vote in referenda to decide important issues. In 1980, for example, Swedes showed that they were uneasy about the safety of nuclear power plants and voted to have them removed. Despite the fact that half of Sweden's electricity comes from the plants, the government vowed to disassemble them by the year 2010.

The government plays an active role in the economy and has controlled its development. This control has allowed the government to protect its expensive social programs.

The Swedish tax system is progressive. The more money people make, the higher percentage

of income tax they pay. Swedes pay taxes that are higher than those paid by most Canadians. And while many large Canadian corporations pay little or no tax, all Swedish corporations pay a tax equal to approximately 52 per cent of their profits.

Fig. 1 Personal Income Tax in Sweden — 1988

Gross Income (Cdn \$)	Taxes	Tax Rate on Net Income
7 250	1 283	35%
18 750	6 663	50%
31 250	13 613	64%

In 1988, the government announced its intention to phase in a new tax system. The plan proposed to reduce the taxes of 90 per cent of all wage earners, to abolish sales tax for everyone except the richest 10 per cent of workers, and to close legal loopholes that allowed corporations to avoid paying all the taxes they owe.

The government owns most major transportation and communication companies, mines, hotels, and 10 per cent of all banks. Twenty per cent of industries are **cooperatives**, companies that are owned by those who work for the company. The largest cooperative is the Federation of Swedish Farmers with over one million members. It owns dairies, meat packing plants, farm implement factories, and more. Many Swedish companies are privately owned. The largest is Volvo. SAAB, Electrolux, Ericssons, and IKEA also provide products, jobs, and investment to Swedes and other people around the world.

The strength of Sweden's economy can also be

seen in its low unemployment rate. Throughout the 1980s, it was under 2 per cent. Furthermore, except for 1987, the Swedish government has maintained a balanced budget.

Sweden's foreign policy is based on **armed neutrality** and **non-alignment**. Non-alignment means that it does not regard itself as an ally of either the Soviet Union or the United States. It strongly supports the United Nations and has been involved in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and the Middle East.

Armed neutrality means that Sweden does not take sides in wars, but still maintains a military that is sufficiently strong to defend the country against invasion. All Swedish men enter the armed forces at the age of eighteen for basic training and three weeks of active patrol. Every four years, they return to active service for additional three-week patrols. At the age of forty-seven, they leave the armed forces and become part of the large Civil Defence Force. In the event of an invasion, the government could mobilize 750 000 fully trained soldiers and a 100 000 member reserve in two weeks. This ability combined with Sweden's sophisticated military equipment makes armed neutrality possible. It allowed Sweden to remain neutral in both world wars.

Too often, Canadians pay attention to another country only when something terrible has happened in that country. Such was the case with the Palme assassination. As we near the twenty-first century, many Canadians will be reevaluating Canada's defence, economic, political, and social policies. They will look to other countries for examples of successful policies. Perhaps in this way Sweden will affect us all in the future.

Recall

1. What social benefits does the government attribute to its left-wing social programs?
2. What is an important difference between Canada's and Sweden's tax systems?
3. Why has Sweden almost always had a coalition government?
4. Describe three types of companies that exist in Sweden.
5. Is Sweden's economy successful? Explain your answer.
6. Explain the policies of non-alignment and armed neutrality.

Consider

1. Construct a chart to illustrate and explain the similarities and differences between the social programs, economies, tax systems, governments, and foreign policies of Canada and Sweden.
2. Are there aspects of the way Swedes have organized their society that you think we should bring to Canada? Explain your answer. What would be some problems and benefits of trying to adapt Swedish policies to Canada?