

between Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with provisions for the later addition of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, the Hudson's Bay Company's territory in the northwest, and the colony of British Columbia. It continued the old boundaries of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as well as most of their old structures of government; and it split the province of Canada into two new provinces, Ontario and Quebec. It established a strong central government at Ottawa with the great bulk of the legislative and taxing power. It gave to the provinces a certain modest share of legislative powers exclusively their own. The only breaches in this exclusive provincial control over their own sphere of power lay in the federal right of veto of provincial legislation, and certain rights of appeal of a minority against breaches of their educational privileges. What the British North America Act did not do was to spell out how these governments were to work; it was simply assumed to be the British system of cabinet executive government responsible to an elected legislature. Thus the Canadian Constitution is partly written, and partly unwritten, the latter being quite as important in its own way as the former.



A Father of Confederation and probably its chief architect, Sir John A. Macdonald, 1815-1891, was the new nation's first Prime Minister. (Portrait by Mrs. Irma Coucill)

Sir John A. Macdonald was the first Prime Minister of the new Dominion of Canada, and created a Cabinet on national lines. Except for the years 1873-1878 he was to remain in power until he died in 1891. Manitoba, formed out of North-Western Territories which had been bought from the Hudson's Bay Company, joined Confederation in 1870; British Columbia joined in 1871 and Prince Edward Island in 1873.

The problems of governing the vast aggregations of western territories were formidable, and the Canadian government had as yet very little knowledge, experience, or even understanding of them. There would have been no province of Manitoba at all in 1870 but for the resistance of Red River people to the Canadian takeover from the Hudson's Bay Company. The Métis of Red River, under the leadership of 28-year-old Louis Riel (1841-1885) forced the Canadian government into granting provincial status to Manitoba.

Similar attitudes on the part of Ottawa affected the early history of the vast North-West Territories. Treaties with Indians were begun, but other problems were not considered very seriously until 1873. Partly as a result of the infiltration of American fur traders into what is now Alberta, and partly as a result of the Cypress Hills massacre in May 1873, the North-West Mounted Police was organized and dispatched westward in 1873, taking up a series of posts across the west, beginning in the summer of 1874.