

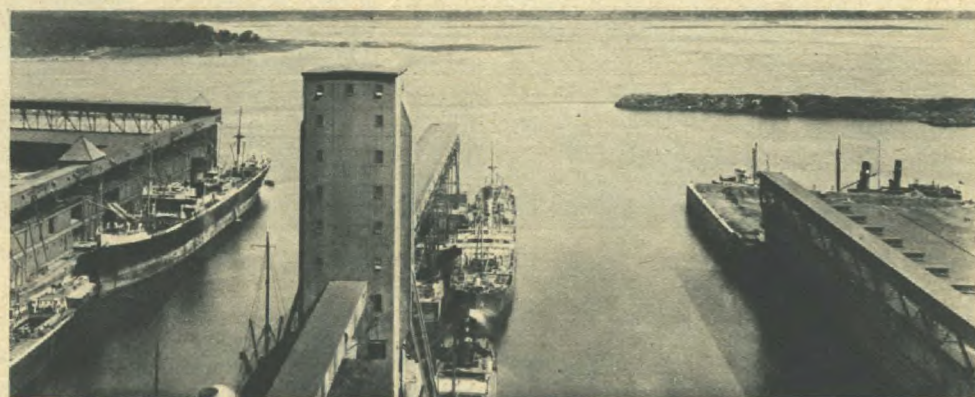
The Dominion of Canada was born in 1867, with the adoption at London of the British North America Act as drafted by the provinces at these meetings. Canada, following the British conception of government, was to have a sovereign parliament, responsible Cabinet government, "with a constitution similar in principle to that of the United Kingdom"—based upon the traditional heritage of individual liberties and the rule of law. The federal plan was designed to meet the problems imposed by Canadian ethnic and geographic divisions.

The new state expanded rapidly in size. The vast territory of the north-west, previously under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company, was acquired by purchase in 1869. (The three Prairie Provinces were to be carved out of this territory: Manitoba in 1870, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905.) In 1871, the Pacific colony entered the Dominion as the province of British Columbia. Prince Edward Island followed suit in 1873. The present geographic outline of Canada was complete in 1895, with the acquisition from Great Britain of the Arctic regions north of the continent.

THE EMERGENCE OF A SOVEREIGN NATION

With Confederation the stage was set for national development on a new scale. The completion of the first Canadian transcontinental railway (the Canadian Pacific) in 1885 opened the way for rapid expansion.

At the time of Confederation the west was largely frontier: there was a scattered population, chiefly concerned with manning the fur-trading posts. The railway brought a growing influx of agricultural settlers from eastern Canada, the British Isles and the United States; at the turn of the century new settlers poured in from continental Europe. In a decade, 2,000,000 immigrants were added to a country of 5,000,000 people.



Lake boats unload grain at Montreal docks.

Toronto's skyline from Lake Ontario.



They founded a nation (Confederation, 1867).

The traditional Canadian lumberjacks, shipwrights and fishermen were being rapidly outnumbered by farmers tilling the broad "sections" of the prairies, producing a new Canadian staple—wheat. High tariff policies were adopted to foster the growing industrial economy.

Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, by his "National Policy" of tariffs, transcontinental railways, and western settlement, set the economic and political pattern for an expanding nation. In addition, he first voiced the objective, later realized, of complete national autonomy within the framework of the British Commonwealth.

By 1900, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, then Prime Minister, could proudly state: "I claim for Canada this: that in future Canada shall be at liberty to act or not to act . . . and that she shall reserve to herself the right to judge whether or not there is cause for her to act . . . in the plenitude, in the majesty of our colonial legislative independence".

The outstanding military contribution of the 425,000 Canadians who fought during the first World War brought about significant constitutional consequences. The Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, signed the peace treaties on behalf of Canada as a sovereign power. Canada led the other British Dominions in the successful claim for individual membership in the League of Nations.

The new autonomy was formally defined at the Imperial Conference in 1926: with reference to the self-governing Dominions, it was stated—

"They are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

These principles were embodied in the Statute of Westminster, passed by the British Parliament in 1931.

Canada participated in the second World War as a completely independent and sovereign nation. She emerged from that war with a greatly enhanced world position, thanks to the Canadian military, economic and industrial share in the efforts of the United Nations.

