

INTRODUCTION

Canada is a land of contrasts. It has golden plains that sweep westward for a thousand miles and merge into a mountainous region five hundred miles wide. Canada is big enough to contain a wasteland a million square miles in size, and also more lakes than any other country. With its narrow cobbled streets one Canadian city, in which French is spoken almost exclusively, resembles a Norman walled town: another, 3,000 miles to the west, has been called "a little bit of old England". Although it contains enough farmland to grow grain for five times its population, Canada is not primarily an agricultural country: it has become a booming industrial nation, most of whose people live in the cities. It is huge in physical size but relatively small in population. In the far north the temperature can drop to 82 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, but on the same parallel of latitude it can also rise to 103 degrees above.

Canadians are themselves a study in contrasts. The two main language groups are English and French and many traditions and customs of both Britain and France have been maintained. This Anglo-French heritage is one of the most important distinguishing features of the country. The two cultures exist side by side, each maintaining a distinct identity, each supplementing and contributing to the other.

Other ethnic groups have made and are making increasing contributions of their own. Areas of Ontario have been settled by Germans and by the Dutch; there are large Ukrainian communities in the western provinces; there is a Moslem mosque in Edmonton, a temple in Vancouver built by Sikhs, and a Russian Orthodox church in Toronto which has ministered to three generations of immigrants from Europe. Over 2,000,000 have come to Canada since the end of the Second World War. Thus Canada, while physically part of the new world, has never cut its ties with the old. An independent North American state, it is also an equal partner in the Commonwealth of Nations and is a member of the United Nations and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The development of air travel has given increasing importance to its geographical position. With the exploitation of its natural resources and the growth of its industrial economy, its position as a great trading nation and a world power has become more and more impressive.

It is with these various aspects of Canada—its history and geography, its economic and trading position, its status as a world power, its people and its way of life, its institutions, its culture, its government and its traditions—that this booklet deals.