

The Atlantic Provinces

Canada is a country of regions, and outsiders may assume that within each of them people and places are pretty much alike. The people of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have more in common than a view of the sea, but their differences are equally striking. In this issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI we consider the pasts, presents and futures of the Atlantic Provinces, collectively and individually.

The Once and Future Prosperity of the Atlantic Provinces

Once they were shipbuilders to the world. The Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, looking backwards in 1940, said that in the mid-19th century the Maritime Provinces* had mastered the techniques of wood, wind and water. On the basis of forest products (including hardwood for masts and hulls) and fish they had made a place for themselves in world industry and trade. Their secondary occupations were nicely geared to support and develop their leading industry.

The years between 1860 and 1869 were the golden age when the Maritimes turned out annually 90 wooden vessels, each displacing 250 tons. Most were loaded with valuable cargo and sailed to Great Britain, where they were sold with their cargo. Then steam replaced sail, and it's been hard times ever since.

The Atlantic Provinces* have produced shrewd men with eyes for business opportunities large and small. Max Aitken of New Brunswick became Lord Beaverbrook, the most powerful press tycoon in the British Commonwealth, and the Ganong Brothers made the world's first chocolate bars in St. Stephen, in the same province, in 1906. Today the provinces have the highest unemployment rates in Canada, and their per-capita incomes are forty per cent below Ontario's and sixty per cent below Alberta's.

In recent decades the federal government has become the principal source of income for the Atlantic Provinces through equalization payments, and the provincial governments have tried various schemes to lift the economy. Some have succeeded. The Cape Breton Development Corporation in Nova Scotia has engendered small factories turning out remarkable varieties of elec-

tronic, wood, metal, fiberglass and leather products. Other ideas have not worked as well. The New Brunswick government poured millions into the production of a sports car, the Bricklin, with plants at St. John and Minto. The enterprise began in 1973 and collapsed in 1975.

However, the overall effect of government intervention has been positive. According to Garfield Pymm, head of the P.J. Gardiner Institute for Small Business Studies at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, "There's a new sense of entrepreneurship around." The demand for loans from the Federal Business Development Bank—most below \$50,000—has risen sixty-three per cent. Two major traditional industries, fishing and fox farming, have been greatly expanded.

The Atlantic Herring Fishermen's Marketing Co-operative has brought spectacular profits to one group of fishermen. With the help of the federal government, in 1976 nine fishing boat cap-



Early photo of Max Aitken who became Lord Beaverbrook.



Fibreglass has replaced wood in the building of many boats.

* Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have been called the Maritime Provinces historically. The term Atlantic Provinces was coined by Premier Joey Smallwood to include Newfoundland when it joined Canada and became a province thirty-one years ago.