

CAL  
EA980  
C17  
Jan. 1972  
DOCS. 1

# CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

LIBRARY E A / BIBLIOTHÈQUE A E  
3 5036 01031405 5

## A PRIMER ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

BROAD FACTS AND SOME INSIDE VIEWS

[THINGS YOU MAY FIND INTERESTING OR USEFUL IN THIS POLITICAL YEAR.]

The Prime Minister does not have exactly the same job as the President. The Liberal Party is not precisely like the Democratic Party. The Progressive-Conservatives are not the same as Republicans, and the New Democratic Party is not the equivalent of the Socialist Party.

The United States will have a major election this year, and Canada may have one too. *Canada Today/D'Aujourd'hui* hopes in this issue to make it possible for the American reader to understand the rules of the game when he reads about future Canadian returns — or about anything political in Canada.

First, a few broad facts about the type of government:

Canada is a federal union with a parliamentary system of government at both national and provincial levels. The federal government has three branches: the executive, the legislative (composed of an elected House of Commons and an appointed Senate) and the judicial. There is no system of checks and balances as there is in the United States.

The system is properly called a constitutional monarchy, for the executive branch is composed of the monarch and the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Queen Elizabeth II is the Queen of Canada, and as such, she is the formal head of state. Her representative in Canada is the Governor General, who is formally appointed by the Queen on the advice of the government of Canada. The Governor General has no power to govern and acts in a formal and ceremonial manner only.

The real executive power in Canada is held by the Prime Minister and his

Cabinet. The leader of the party with the largest number of seats in the House of Commons (as determined at general elections that must take place no more than five years apart) becomes the Prime Minister. He then chooses his Cabinet from among members of his party who have won seats in the House of Commons. The cabinet ministers run the various departments of government — Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Public Works, Post Office and Transport, for example — and together they shape government policy. (See Privy Council, page six.) Generally, the cabinet members are chosen to represent the various regions and interest groups in the country.

There is no sharp distinction between the executive and legislative branches in Canada, for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are members of the Commons, the main part of the legislative branch of government. To get laws passed, the Cab-

*Election poster, 1891, for Conservative Party leader, Sir. John A. Macdonald.*

