

or prairie presses close to the suburban edge of every Canadian town. In summer the boreal lights, a shaking skyful of LSD visions, can remind the most urban of Canadians that they are a northern people, that winter will bring again its hundred-degree drop in the weather, and that their wilderness stretches straight to the permafrost, the ice pack, and the pole.

Nature dreadful and infinite has inhibited the growth of the higher amenities in Canada. The need to wrestle a livelihood from a cruel land has put a premium on some of the sterner virtues—frugality and caution, discipline and endurance. Geography even more than religion has made us puritans, although ours is a puritanism tempered by orgy. Outnumbered by trees and unable to lick them, a lot of Canadians look as though they had joined them—having gone all faceless or a bit pulp-and-papery, and mournful as the evening jack-pine round the edges of the voice, as if (in Priestley's phrase) something long lost and dear were being endlessly regretted. Or there are those who run—by car, train or plane (flying more air miles per capita than any other people), lickety-split as if the spirit of the northern woods, the Wendigo himself, were on their trails. Nature has not always been an enemy, but she has rarely been something to be tamed either. At best we have exploited her quickly and moved on. No wonder the atmosphere of our towns still often suggests that of the mining camp or the logging drive, the trading post or the sleeping compound. If transportation has been crucial

for Canada, and our main-street towns attest the worship of train and motor car, then communications (more telephone calls than anybody else), particularly radio and television (the world's longest networks), have been vital. It is no surprise when some of old Rawhide's Canadian characters become so addicted to the telegraph key that they can only talk in the dah-dah-dits of Morse code.

But Canadians have also learned to live with nature and derive strength from her. It is not just the Group of Seven who came to terms with her terrible grandeur. From the first military surveyors and the C.P.R. artists down to the abstract expressionists of post-modern Toronto, our painters have been profoundly influenced by the Canadian landscape. 'Everything that is central in Canadian writing', says Northrop Frye, 'seems to be marked by the imminence of the natural world'. The American critic Edmund Wilson sees the most distinguishing feature of Hugh MacLennan's work as the unique way he places his characters in 'their geographical and even their meteorological setting.' Our historians do not argue about the amount but the kind of influence geography has had on our history—whether it has been the north-south pull of North American regionalism or the east-west thrust of the St. Lawrence and Saskatchewan river systems and the Laurentian Shield.

Precisely because life has been so bleak and minimal for so long in so much of Canada, the frontiers, far more than in the United States, have been dependent on the metropolitan

centres of Toronto and Montreal and Europe. A visitor to pioneer Saskatchewan in 1907 remarked at the strange sight of a sod hut with a big Canadian Bank of Commerce sign on it, open for business. The essence of the Canadian west is in that image. Organized society usually arrived with the settlers or ahead of them—not only the branch bank manager, but the mounted policeman and the railway agent, the missionary and the Hudson's Bay factor. Dawson City at the height of the gold rush had its sins and shortcomings, but even here lawlessness was not one of them. Violence and terror do not yet stalk the subways or the streets of darkest Toronto.

Among peoples as different as the Metis and the Doukhobors, the community and its custom was the dominating force in western settlement. Even the most self-reliant Protestant pioneer in Canada West or Alberta was never quite a Davy Crockett or a Daniel Boone. From the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 to that of the C.P.R. and the dozens of modern Crown corporations, the large, centrally planned enterprise, dominating its field and supported by government regulation, has been typical of Canadian development. As the historian William Morton says, Canada, in contrast to the United States, is founded on the principle of allegiance rather than social contract, on the organic growth of tradition rather than on an explicit act of reason or assertion of the revolutionary will. The B.N.A. Act sets up the objectives of peace, order, and good government, rather than