Political, Social, and Economic Changes in Canada (1867-1917)

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Post Civil War (1960’s)

• Canada feared an American attack after the Civil War
• Britain did not consider Canada to be an essential colony, as it had been self-governing for 20 years
• In 1864, the two competing political parties in the west—the Tories and the Clear Grits—united in the Great Coalition
• The Quebec Conference of 1864 lead to the union of the eastern colonies by the British North America Act in 1867
• The unification of Canada is known as Confederation
British Influence

• Canada would be somewhat independent, but still a part of the British Empire

• The Canadian government could only control internal affairs

• Any international issues would still be settled by the British government
The Red River Rebellion

- Natives and Métis (children of Natives and French people) were opposed to their land being purchased.

- The united country of Canada was led by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald.

- Macdonald was the former co-leader of the Tories.

- Westward settlement was encouraged, and the Canadian government purchased the North-Western territory and Rupert’s land from the Hudson Bay Company in 1869.
Red River Rebellion Cont.

• Negotiations between the people of the Red River settlement and the Canadian government failed

• In 1869 and 1870, Louis Riel lead a rebellion, which was stomped out by Macdonald’s militia

• Riel fled to the United States

• The Province of Manitoba was created to protect the rights of the Natives and their descendants
New Territories

• By 1866, the colonies of British Columbia were united, giving important access to Europe and Asia

• British Columbia agreed to join Canada in 1871 when Macdonald agreed to build a transcontinental Railroad

• This lead to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Dominion Land Survey

• In 1873, Prince Edward Island joined Canada and Macdonald created the North-West Mounted Police to keep order in the West
Political Turmoil

• In 1873 it was revealed that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had funded Macdonald’s 1872 campaign

• A new election was held in 1872 and Alexander Mackenzie became the new Prime Minister

• In 1878, Macdonald was reelected

• The Canadian Pacific Railway Company continued westward expansion
Macdonald’s Return

• Macdonald introduced the National Policy in 1879 in an effort to compete with the United States, which had a much stronger Economy

• The Policy called for the completion of the transcontinental railroad and a system of protective tariffs

• The U.S. and Canada had a trade treaty from 1854 to 1866, but the treaty was nullified before Confederation

• The Policy was beneficial for Canada’s independence, it hurt the Colonies for whom trade with the U.S. was beneficial
The Province of Ontario

• Oliver Mowat, the leader of Ontario, wanted a constitution that gave provinces more power rather than a strong central government.

• The border between Ontario and Manitoba was highly contested, with the central government wishing to push it further into Ontario territory.
The North-West Rebellion

• As railroads became more expansive, many Métis once again felt their way of life was being attacked

• In 1884, Louis Riel returned from exile and lead the North-West Rebellion

• The rebels were defeated and Riel was hanged for treason, which caused even more tension between the French and English speaking Canadians.
The Last Spike

• The Last Spike was driven into the Canadian Pacific Railway at 9:22 am on November 2, 1885.

• The driving of the spike signaled the completion of the railway

• It is common for the final spike to be made of gold or silver, but the Last Spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was made of iron, identical to every other spike
Manitoba Schools

• In 1890, the government of Manitoba passed the Manitoba Schools Act

• This act removed French as the province’s official language and removed government funding for religious education

• Strong tension was created within Manitoba, and prime minister Mackenzie Bowell was forced to resign
Mackenzie Bowell

- Originally a senator
- Prime minister of Manitoba 1894-1896
- Responsible for the failed Manitoba Schools Act
- Went back on the Act in an effort to save face
- Forced to resign in 1896 by his own cabinet
The Gold Rush

• In August 1896, gold was discovered in the Klondike River

• Between 30,000 and 40,000 people flocked to the river to make their fortunes

• The Canadian government decided to make the Yukon an independent territory so the North-West Territories’ administration didn’t have to deal with the foreigners
Alaska

• It was difficult to access the Yukon without crossing through Alaska

• Canada argued its boundary with Alaska included the Lynn Canal and the port of Skagway, both of which were claimed by America

• In 1903, the British delegate sided with the Americans in order to ensure good relations between Washington and London.

This was a contributing factor to the downfall of prime minister Wilfrid Laurier.
The Laurier Government

- Prime Minister 1896-1911
- Lead Canada during a period of rapid growth
- Laurier wanted to unify Canada and shift the focus away from Europe and toward North America
- This policy is known as continentalism
- Created a compromise to the Manitoba Schools Act allowing for government funded Catholic education
The Laurier Government Cont.

• Created a compromise between French and English Canadians during the Second Boer War in South Africa
  – French Canadians believed the Boer War was an English problem
  – Laurier sent a volunteer army to fight the war

• Inducted Alberta and Saskatchewan into the Confederation

• In 1910, Laurier introduced the Naval Service Bill to make Canada less dependent on Britain

• Pro-British imperialists brought about Laurier’s downfall
Racism in British Columbia

• In the early 20th century, it was believed by many Canadians that Asian immigrants threatened their jobs.

• It was also believed that the Chinese would bring opium addiction to the Canadian people.

• A head tax of $500 per person was placed on Chinese immigrants entering the country.
Bibliography


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