

CHAPTER 3

1939 TO PRESENT-DAY

Modernization of Québec,

Quiet Revolution

& Contemporary Québec

PART 2

Duplessis era

Maurice Duplessis

(Union nationale)



Premier of Québec

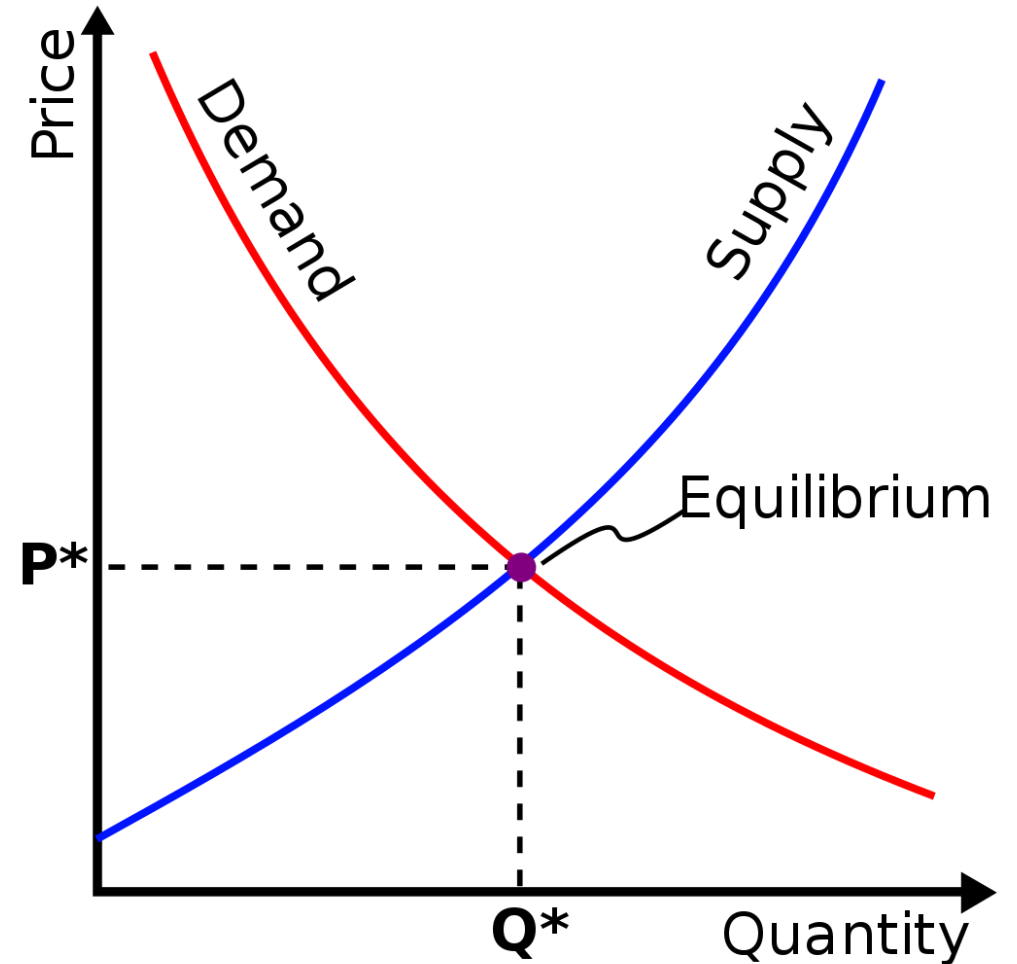
- 1936-1939
- 1944-1959 (death)

Le chef or La Grande Noirceur?

During this era, Québec was pulled in 2 directions: between the security of tradition and the attractions of modernity.

Economic liberalism

- Duplessis **supported economic liberalism.**
- According to this principle:
 - the government should **intervene as little as possible** in the economy
 - the economy should be governed by the **laws of supply and demand.**



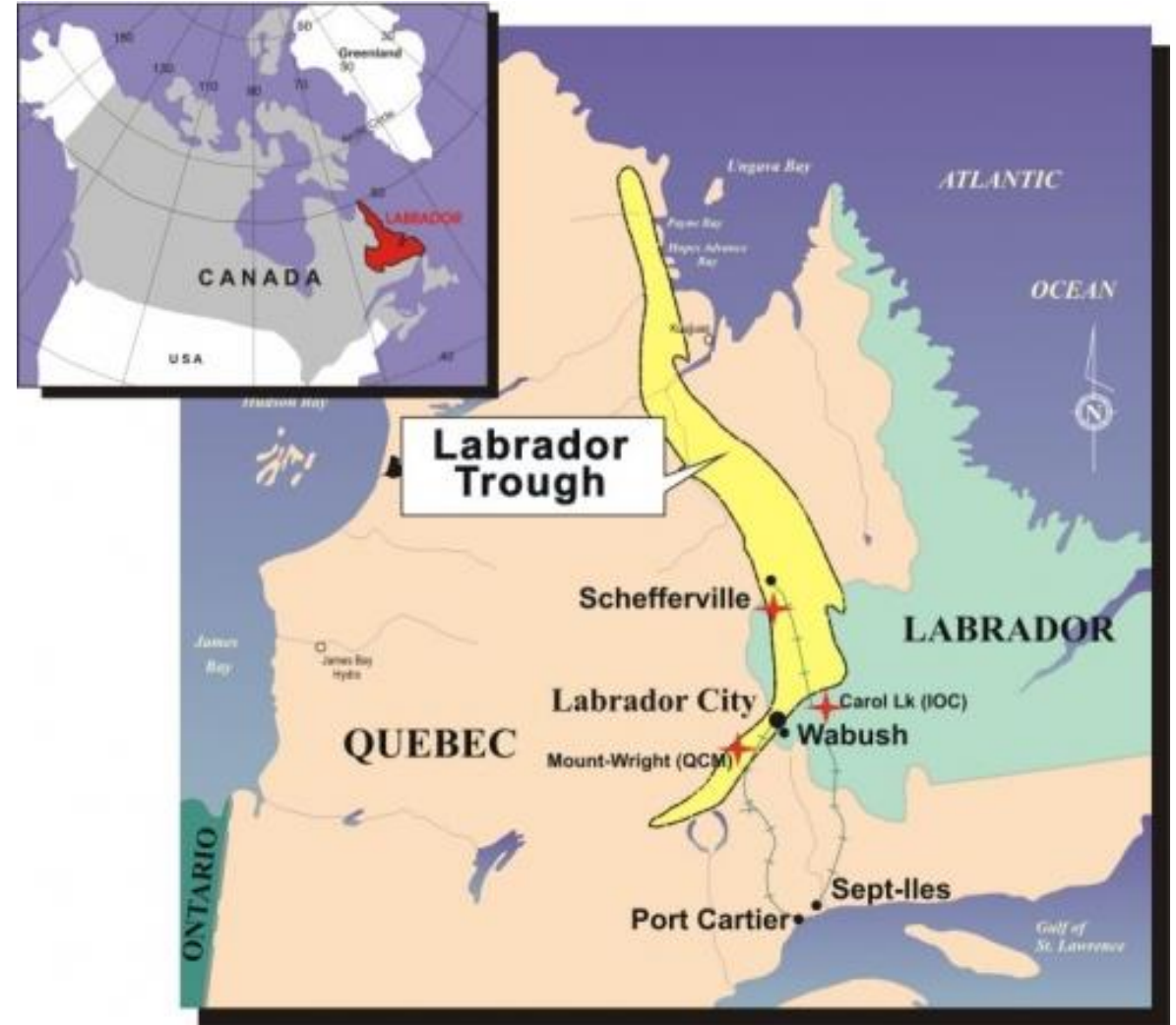
Economic liberalism

- When Duplessis returned to power in 1944, **the economy of Western countries was booming**. There was a **high demand for raw materials** (iron, wood, pulp and paper, aluminum and asbestos)
- To stimulate the economy, **Duplessis attracted foreign investors in Québec**. He praised Québec's:
 - obedient and diligent workforce
 - low tax rates
 - lack of government intervention.



Economic liberalism

- For example, Duplessis managed to attract **American mining companies** that exploited the large **iron ore deposits** on the **Côte-Nord and Northern Québec**.
 - These companies built roads, railways and wharves
 - They generated population growth and development
 - However, they sold the iron ore at very low prices.



Economic liberalism

- Duplessis invested in regional development:
 - The government invested \$12 million **to provide electricity to rural areas**
 - From 1945 to 1955, the **proportion of farms with access to electricity jumped from 19% to 90%.**



Economic liberalism

- **Under Duplessis, the province was deficit-free:**
 - The government borrowed as little money as possible
 - The government invested as little as possible in infrastructure (roads, hospitals and schools)
 - The few contracts the government awarded were often to “friends” of the party, who donated a certain percentage of their profits to the *Union nationale*’s campaign fund in return.



Social conservatism

- Duplessis was also a strict **social conservative**
- Duplessis' main aspirations were to:
 - preserve the **French language**, the **Catholic religion**, **tradition**, and the **status quo**
 - promote **farming** and **country living**
- As a result, support for the *Union nationale* came mainly from **rural areas** and **members of the clergy**.





Padlock Law



In 1937, the **Duplessis government** adopted the *Act to Protect the Province Against Communist Propaganda*, or the **Padlock Law**.



Padlock Law



- It allowed the attorney general to **shut down** any building used to create **communist propaganda** (by padlocking the door) and to **imprison** anyone involved
- By not specifying what constituted “communist propaganda”, it gave the **government power to limit the influence of unions** by associating them with communism
- Workers’ strikes were harshly suppressed
- In 1957, the **Supreme Court of Canada struck the law down** (deemed unconstitutional).





Padlock Law



In 1949, in the town of Asbestos, a **strike broke out among asbestos workers.**

The workers demanded better health protection.

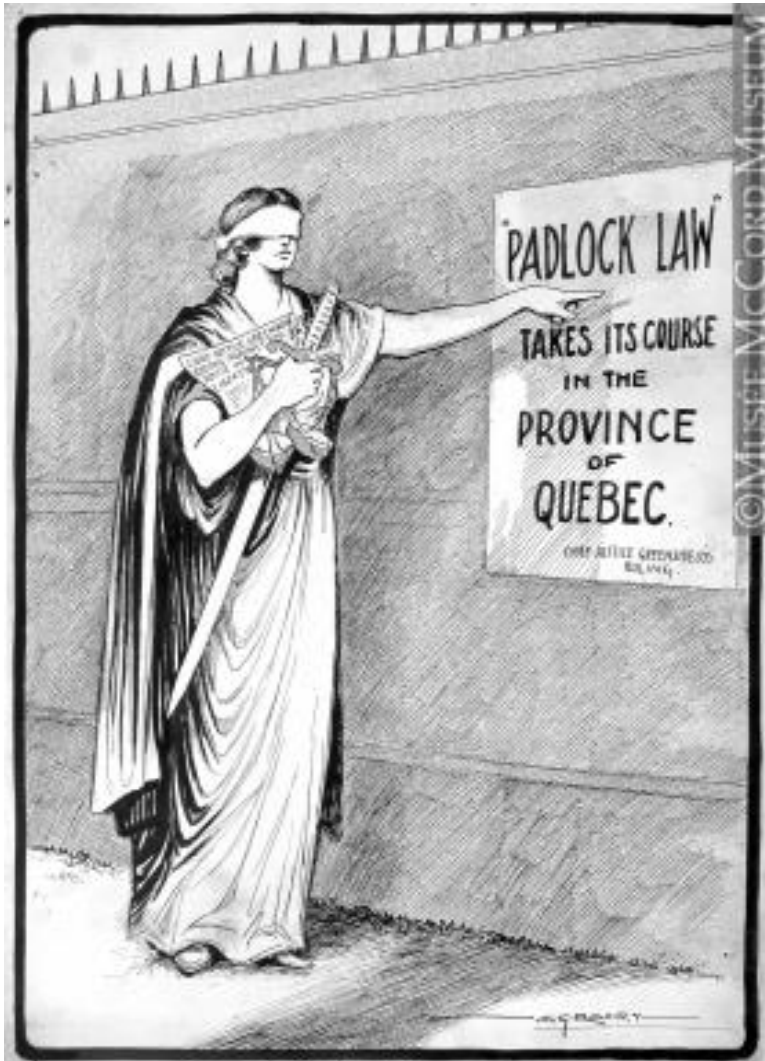
Duplessis sided with the bosses, and the strike was declared illegal.

Maurice Duplessis & Bishop Charbonneau





Padlock Law



Justice and the Padlock Law, Arthur George Racey, 1937

Justice is represented by a woman with her eyes covered.

The artist responsible for the caricature is implying that the Padlock Act is a blind and unfair law.

Funding of education and health

- Following WW2, there was a **baby boom** that brought greater needs in terms of education and health care
- **Under Duplessis, the education and health systems of Québec:**
 - were still the responsibility of the Catholic Church
 - depended on government funding
 - were underdeveloped
 - were underfunded
 - lacked equipment, facilities and teachers.



Clericalism

- Since the Conquest in 1760, the Catholic Church had a great deal of influence over the lives of everyday citizens and the ruling elite:
 - It allowed the French Canadian population to keep its **traditions, language and nationhood**
 - It was responsible for **education** (from primary school to university)
 - It **ran hospitals**
 - It provided **social services** (orphanages, aid for the poor, etc.)
 - It organized **unions**, farmers' associations, youth and women's groups
- Etc.

Clericalism



- The influence of the Church was especially strong during the Duplessis era:
 - Duplessis encouraged Christian values
 - In exchange for Duplessis' support, the Catholic Church encouraged the public to vote for his party, the *Union nationale*.

Clericalism



A slogan repeated both by partisans of the *Union nationale* and by a number of priests illustrates the relationship between Duplessis and the Catholic clergy: “**Heaven is blue, hell is red.**” Blue was the colour of the *UN* and red was the colour of the *Parti libéral*.

Provincial autonomy

- Since WW2, the Canadian government had centralized its powers in Ottawa by passing the *War Measures Act*. Among other things, **this law allowed the federal government to encroach on the powers of the provinces.**
 - Duplessis was a strong **defender of provincial autonomy**
 - Duplessis feared that the loss of power in Québec **would lead to the assimilation of French Canadians**
 - Duplessis demanded that the Constitution of 1867 be respected.

L'INTREPIDE DÉFENSEUR DE NOS DROITS



COOPÉRATION
OUI

ASSIMILATION
JAMAIS

THE FEARLESS DEFENDER OF OUR RIGHTS
COOPERATION YES, ASSIMILATION NEVER

Provincial autonomy

- Examples of Duplessis' autonomy policies:
 - In 1954, Duplessis passed a law implementing a **15% provincial income tax**, despite the existing federal law. Ottawa eventually had to cede part of its tax deducted in Québec. It was a major victory for Duplessis.

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Provincial autonomy



- Examples of Duplessis' autonomy policies:
 - **To affirm the distinct character of Québec,** Duplessis adopted the Québec flag, the *Fleurdelisé* in 1948, replacing the Union Jack.

The current flag of Québec – *le Fleurdelisé*



Opposition

- Maurice Duplessis had harsh critics among young intellectuals, trade unionists and some influential members of the Catholic Church:
 - In 1956, 2 priests published an article entitled *The Christian and the elections*, which denounced the **stupidity and immorality of the election practices of the *Union nationale*** (corruption, bribes, threats).

Opposition

- Maurice Duplessis had harsh critics among young intellectuals, trade unionists and some influential members of the Catholic Church:
 - Socially, Duplessis was criticized for **clinging to the past** and for **including religion in electoral campaign**. Many **feminists opposed him**, demanding to have the same rights as men.

Opposition

- Maurice Duplessis had harsh critics among young intellectuals, trade unionists and some influential members of the Catholic Church:
 - Politically, Duplessis was criticized for “**selling out**” Québec to **American companies**
 - **Unions** mobilized and opposed the Duplessis government for the side of the bosses in labour conflicts
 - Journalists like Pierre Elliott Trudeau started a magazine, *Cité libre*, that gave them a platform to express their ideas.

Duplessis orphans scandal



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