

## PREFACE

THIS book is a study in commerce and politics. It is an attempt to trace the relations between the commercial system of the St. Lawrence and the political development of Canada during almost a century of its history. The St. Lawrence river inspired and supported a trading system which was both transatlantic and transcontinental in extent, and political as well as economic in significance. Its needs could no more be satisfied within the sphere of commerce than its growth could be confined within the territorial limits of the Canadas; and it involved its supporters in the concerns of the British Empire, the affairs of the North American continent and the provincial politics of Canada itself. These political and economic interests, which were at once so wide-spread and so deep-rooted, were represented by the successive generations of Canadian merchants; and it is largely from the point of view of the commercial group that this study has been written. It was the merchants, above all others, who struggled to win the territorial empire of the St. Lawrence and to establish its institutional expression, the Canadian commercial state; and though their influence was undeniably less than the pressure which they persistently applied, they may be regarded as one of the most continuously important groups in Canadian history.

To stand, as the merchants did, at the junction of commerce and politics, is inevitably to lose sight of some portion of the wide fields which lie on either side. There can be no claim, nor is there any implication, that this study satisfies the traditional requirements of either a general economic or a general political history. The main purpose of this book is to set forth, as a related whole, the ambitions, programmes and struggles which had their central inspiration in the St. Lawrence river; and while the theme of the St. Lawrence is vitally important for Canada, and all-important for this book, it is not the only theme in Canadian history. There are historical problems of varying importance for which there can be little accommodation in this essay; and the limits of its design may dictate the cursory treatment of topics both economic and political without necessarily implying any judgment upon their

historical importance. *Empire of the St. Lawrence* is intended to serve as an introduction to a theme of enduring significance in Canadian development. It is not meant to provide a final and self-sufficient interpretation of Canadian history.

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**PART I**

**THE FIRST UNITY OF THE ST. LAWRENCE**

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