Foreword

LLOYD AXWORTHY, MARCH 2017

DARRYL RAYMAKER is a charter member of one the most exclusive associations in Canada—he's an Alberta Liberal.

He has used his long experience as an activist for the Liberal cause to write an intriguing tale that centres on Pierre Elliott Trudeau's first term as prime minister and the unrealized opportunity to bridge one of the classic fault lines of Canadian politics: the rift between the Liberal Party in Ottawa and Alberta's political class. In this volume, Raymaker provides an informed participant's view of the dynamics at work in Canada at a time when both the nation and Alberta were in a phase of accelerated growth and new political power alignments were being forged; a time when key decisions were being made on resource development, on Canada–US relations, on federal–provincial entanglements, and on defining the contours of the nation's emerging presence in the world.

Written by an insider, this book has a personal touch in describing the personalities and players, the intrigues and rivalries, the opportunities gained and lost, and the configuration of economic and political interests. For the political junkie, it's a rousing analysis of the flow of action and

events that launched careers, made and broke reputations, and the sacrifices made by those who entered the arena of "the Blood Sport."

I was beginning my own political career as a Manitoba Liberal during the late 1960s and, contrary to Peter Lougheed's claim of exclusiveness for Albertans, we made common cause with our fellow Liberals from Alberta. This book brought back fond memories of many of the larger-than-life characters, committed partisans, and superb political operatives who toiled in the Liberal ranks of the province. Nick Taylor, Pat Mahoney, Una Maclean Evans, Mel Hurtig, Cam Millikin and so many others, gone now but not forgotten. People who made real contributions to the public wealth of their province and Canada.

But *Trudeau's Tango* is more than just a memory stick of particular people, times and places. It provides useful insights into the forces at play in that defining moment in our country's history and the consequences with which we live today. And it all begins with one of the most intriguing politicians of our time, Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Fresh from his win at the federal Liberal Party leadership convention in Ottawa, he came west in the 1968 election campaign ready to breathe new life into western Canadian Liberalism. And the early signs were promising. Trudeaumania was as evident at the Calgary Stampede parade as it was on Spadina Avenue. Good people vied for Liberal nominations, and the election itself saw four quality members elected from Alberta. There was the making of a solid caucus base from which to grow.

Yet Raymaker reminds us that often the worst political enemies are not those in competing parties but those within our own. He describes the behind-the-scenes schemes of Senator Harry Hays, a long time Liberal power-broker, and Bud Olson to starve the provincial wing of the Liberal Party in order to shotgun a marriage with the provincial Socreds—schemes that backfired and hurt the federal Liberals.

Hu Harries, the talented former dean of business at the University of Alberta, was sore at not making cabinet so began following the rogue path of the outsider and did not participate as a team member. That was left to Pat Mahoney, a clever, outgoing lawyer from Calgary, and Allan Sulatycky,

a down-to-earth man from the Rocky Mountains who understood the importance of constituency politics. But it was not a cohesive group.

Then there was the oil patch, a varied congeries of people tied to the oil business, which was primarily run from Houston. They had their friends in the media and their acolytes in the provincial Conservatives, all united by the strong belief that no Liberal from the east could do much good. Efforts by the Trudeau government to tackle economic reform by changing the tax system or solidifying national unity were greeted with scorn and hostility by those in the industry. They didn't like a government not entirely beholden to their interests. Looks familiar to a contemporary observer.

Raymaker makes an observation that is different from the conventional treatment of the early Trudeau days. Lest we forget, 1970 was the time of the FLQ and the October Crisis. Trudeau stood on the barricades, faced down the mobs, and emerged as the quintessential strong leader everywhere in Canada, including the western provinces. If there had been an election immediately post-crisis, he would have returned victorious and certainly with renewed support in Alberta. That could have been the game changer in re-aligning political forces. But Raymaker adumbrates that refusing to opportunistically take advantage of people's post-crisis emotional high was Trudeau's finest moment as a man of principle. It was also his worst moment politically, having missed an opportunity to create a truly national party with significant western representation.

The rest was downhill. Trudeau's government, caught in the cross-winds of inflation and unemployment, implemented serious cutbacks and imposed price controls. In consequence, inflation stayed high and unemployment soared. President Nixon came in with his import surcharges (*déjà vu*), causing great angst among those in the oil patch who demanded retaliation. Grain farmers were hit by tumbling prices that brought them (and their tractors) into the streets of Saskatoon. Western alienation was further fuelled by a growing sentiment in Liberal circles (strongly popularized by Mel Hurtig, a putative Liberal candidate from Edmonton) against foreign ownership of our natural resource industries; clearly anathema to oil executives.

Then there was Peter Lougheed. Alberta's new Progressive Conservative premier took no political prisoners, especially if they were Liberals. He was smart, young, and a presence in whatever room he occupied. He made common cause with other provincial premiers—especially Quebec's Robert Bourassa—who were demanding more powers for the provinces, and became the lightning rod of opposition to the Trudeau government. There was no one in Alberta able to take him on.

The Trudeau government limped into the 1972 election bedeviled by bad economic news, unrest among key provincial governments, and a tax reform package that was a whipping boy for every special interest group in the country. Their campaign was not much better. It flagged under "The Land is Strong," a lame slogan if there ever was one, making it was clear the electricity of Trudeaumania was gone.

And in Alberta, the caucus was divided and the organization weakened by the previous stratagem to bury provincial Liberals who went to Lougheed and not the federal Libs. There wasn't a caucus survivor from the Commons. The party was back in the control of Harry Hays and the senators. The chance to ride the Trudeau wave of '68 dribbled away in '72.

The book's epilogue concludes with how Trudeau's post-1972 tenure was one of fractious relations with Alberta. Any momentum to harness the province's growing wealth and importance, fully engaged in a national common cause, was lost because of the failure of the politics of resource ownership.

What began as something so promising in the election campaign of 1968 couldn't be revived. And, yet to come in the early 1980s was the National Energy Program, which deserves a treatment from Darryl Raymaker in what I hope will be an ongoing commitment to holding crucial segments of his province's history up to careful personal scrutiny.

To look back is to see history unfolding. In 2017, Canada is at another crossroads, and another Trudeau is in power. In Alberta, there is the same interest in the oil patch, the same deep conservatism of Alberta Tories, the same weakness in Liberal grassroots leadership, and the same divisions between eastern and western Canada that handicap the country.

"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."